

MANSON'S VISION

A POEM

REV. THOMAS NIELD



Class PS 2466

Book N3M3

Copyright N^o _____

COPYRIGHT DEPOSIT

1.50



MANSON'S VISION

A Poem

BY

REV. THOMAS NIELD

THE ADVANCE PUBLISHING COMPANY

NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE

1912

PS 2466
N3 M3

COPYRIGHTED BY THE AUTHOR. 1912.



71.50

©CLA327627

721

CANTO I



MANSON'S VISION

CANTO I

My mind was burdened with a complex theme,
Involving the eternal verities,
And sank beneath the weight, when darkness came
And on its bosom lullabied my thoughts.
Becoming then oblivious of the weight,
I soon was in the borderland where dreams
Are born; from whence, as from a chrysalis
Emerging, I became exalted to
A state of super-consciousness, in which
Existence was an exquisite delight,
And I a bubble on an ocean of
Placidity. While thus in sweet repose,
I saw the conformation of a ray
Of light, as when a rainbow dawns upon
The clouds, which, as I gazed on it, assumed
A contour and a personality,
Causing me wonderment expressionless.
For never on the earth had I beheld
Such blended beauty, having all the hues
That seem like hints of color in a shell,
Glinting in playful changefulness upon
A base of pearly purity; and yet
So indistinct in outline as to give
No thought of size but that of majesty.

While gazing on him, fascinated to
An awed delight, a voice I seemed to feel,
My being penetrating with a sound
That was a liquid sweetness thrilling me.
And thus, in more than common speech, he said:
"Here is the threshold of a higher life;
A threshold thou art privileged to pass.
Receive thou, then, that life in plenitude,
With the equipment of its powers."
We rose above the atmosphere of earth

At once

Into a dark immensity, which made
More luminous the splendor of his sheen,
When to myself and my environment
A strange transition came, and I perceived
That space was an ethereal substance whose
Conductibility enabled us
To traverse distance with the speed of light,
As prompted by the impulse of his will.
In the vast circumambieney were worlds
In numbers baffling all the power of thought
And numerals to represent; with which
Compared the earth were as a golden coin,
The sun a silver shield. A startling burst
Of incandescent light enrobed them as
I gazed, and so o'erwhelmed me that I sank
Into a swoon of ecstasy.

Quickly

The one beside me more distinct became
In contour, and our natures seemed to blend,
As in the spectrum of a blissful life;
Yet individual life, with knowledge his

And mine the ignorance. Dumb in my awe
I viewed the scene, when he resumed discourse.

“Life is a ladder with successive rungs.
As in the little sphere on earth, from the
Minutest creature up to man, who in
Comparison is god to all below,
So in the realm of spirit. Rung on rung
It reaches till its top is near to God,
Who is disclosed in amplitude to suit
The varied scope of their intelligence,
Up to the throne. Here is a lower rung—
Infinity adumbrant—whence thou shalt
Ascend and see, as in a mirror, what
To direct vision were invisible.”

At once the orbs were more distinctly grand;
Nor telescope devised by man could give
An inkling of the magnitude to which
The separate ones enlarged as I beheld.
Al, though diverse, with sameness as the leaves
Upon a tree, not one but seemed a fit
Abode for beings with a lofty form
Of life. Nor orbs alone were magnified,
But my attendant grew in person more
Majestic, as a mountain when the sun's
Warm fingers fold away the curtains of
Its mist. And I myself seemed to myself
Enlarged to fuller rounded consciousness,
Intensified as with increasing life,
Expanded in my intellectual powers,
With open floodgates of desire to know
The mysteries of the spheres—floodgates through
which

His will could pour a satisfying stream.
While gazing in rapt silence, I beheld
Him swathed in iridescence, as it were
A robe of sunlight with sapphiric tint,
His countenance a beatific smile,
To which a glow of high intelligence
Gave captivating power, until I felt
So bound to him by bands of love I could
Not, would not, part; so close, his nature more
Transfused into my own, and I became
Subservient to his mind and will; at which
My faculties unfolded as a rose
When quickening sunbeams burn within its heart.
Surely, I thought, in him was Deity,
Since less than Deity had no such power,
And I essayed to worship him, when he
At once forbade.

“Worship belongs to Him
Alone who flung these orbs as dewdrops from
The fingertips of His omnipotence,
To glitter in the boundless field of space.
I am, compared with Him, as mote to thee,
Or as an atom to infinity.
He is the Infinite who made the worlds
And all therein. In absoluteness of
His rule and essence of His being, He
Transcends our finite thought, though mirroring
His character in finite forms—which, to
Be understood, He must perforce employ—
Revealing it in various aspects known
As attributes, to serve as ideals for
The finite mind. Yet, as the final fact,

He has no attribute but that of Will—
Will as the universal law by which
All things exist and operate—and what
Are known as attributes are modes in which
His will displays activity that keeps
In endless whirl around some central plan.
To Him duration has no measurement,
But is a limitless arena where
His purposes have unincumbered play,
And are and will remain unchangeable.
For what He is He ever was, what knows
Has ever known, what does has ever had
In mind. From gravity of atoms to
The intermovements of the worlds that hang
In linked dependence, each on all and all
On each, no change that has been, is or will
Be, but belongs to one harmonious thought
And purpose ever clearly in His mind.
Hence nothing is but what He wills to be
Contributive to some great ultimate,
As vouched by sufferance when He could prevent.
E'en sin, by sufferance, has been in His plan,
But reprobated by the law of life
In its retributive effects. Wherefore
From no event comes disappointment or
Surprise, or other perturbation of
The mind, but He serenely contemplates
The grand concatenation of the whole,
Feeling toward all as He has ever felt,
Will ever feel—complacently. Elsewise
He must have wrought in ignorance, which but
A pigmy finite could conceive. All things

Are by and from and for Himself. Suns are
To Him as hands to thee, and planets as
His fingers. Gravitation is the grasp
That keeps them all in harmony, and light
A vitalizing thrill of energy
That weaves the variegated web of life,
From mite to man, in whom His attributes
Reflect with an immortal glow ; and thence
Expanding in a multiplicity
Of force, effulges in the beings at
Life's apex in the more transcendent orbs.
And thus He is the motive power in all,
While all His operations ramify
As law, His will and energy behind,
Directing all, as human thought and will
Direct the motors of the flesh. Not that
The seen are parts or elements of Him,
But media of communication to
The finite consciousness, and vehicles
Of energy, through which He executes
His purposes and plans within the sphere
Of finite cognizance ; for only so
Can finite mind approximate the thought
Of Him as having personality."

But does not immanence, I asked, imply
His personality in everything,
So that in all are elements of Him ?

"He is not that through which He operates ;
For that which moves a thing is not the thing.
Thou art not what thou wert, and yet thou art.
Then what thou wert had something that was not
Thyself, while yet as real as thyself,

It gaged the possibilities of thought,
And biased all thy moods and impulses.
But now thou art a sublimated self.
Therefore, although it was thy vehicle
Of action, it was not thyself, or now,
Without it, thou wert not thyself. So while
In matter His potential immanence
Is seen, to the last atom, matter is
Not God, nor yet an element of Him.
He has sustained the universal frame
Of being in a creakless harmony,
And unto those in every orb revealed
Himself so graciously, so greatly blest
Its occupants, that they have seemed to be
The special objects of His providence,
The individual person in His eye,
As though he were the sole inhabitant.
What thou art thinking mine is not my power
But His, whose will I represent, my bliss
That will to do. Thou shalt attend me and
Behold His works with vision clarified."

Then he took flight, as human lips would say;
Yet movement was but as a play of mind,
From orb to orb as that from thought to thought,
Unhampered by the thrall of gravity,
The chafe of friction and the consciousness
Of time, when, as the panorama of
A dream, the scene dissolved and we were on
An orb whose magnitude made earth a dwarf,
Its substance as of light solidified,
With splendor that had blinded fleshly eyes.

But little was that made me think of earth.
No wanton winds in blustering carnival;
No sun oppressed with scorch of torrid heat;
Nor Arctic rigors racked with ruthless cold;
But all was balmy as the breath of June;
So equable, I nothing thought of heat
Or cold, as one at noon thinks not of light;
And silence and serenity were as
A circumambient atmosphere perfumed
With peace, which to inhale I thought was heaven.
Peopled it was with beings who, compared,
Made man a speck of insignificance.
Stately they were in form, so far as form
Definable they had, and in their mien
As dignified as Justice in his robes,
And ceaseless in some high activity,
As though intent upon congenial tasks.
Yet every motion had reposeful ease,
As eagle floating on the upper air,
While happiness in every feature played,
As twinkling sunbeams on a shimmering lake.
Who, whence and what those blessed ones? I asked;
To which he answered me:

“These are the first

And sole inhabitants of this abode;
A world prepared for them and they for it.
Eons on eons have elapsed since then;
And here in some sublime activity
Will they remain. Spirit they are, and yet
In elemental matter bodied, which
Is an attenuated substance as
Removed from grosser forms as gases from

Granitic rock, hence from decay exempt,
To whom the name of death is all unknown.
Were they pure spirit, thou couldst see them not;
And lower spirits but in part perceive
The higher glories of superior ones.
In this disrobement of thy lower self,
Thy nature is exalted to a plane
Where these and higher orders thou mayst glimpse,
As the dull ox beheld thee in the flesh,
But not the essence of their nature see.
God only is pure spirit, hence unseen;
Than which but little can be told, since words
Express but what is knowable; while He
In person is unknown, except as He
Impinges on the consciousness, making
The finite feel His immanence, and as
Revealed His character. To finite He
Is infinite as earth is to an ant,
Unmeasured by imagination's line,
Enthroned in vastness greater than His works,
While occupying space in definite
Extent, since having personality,
In whose immensity the mind is lost
As a dropt pebble in the vastest sea.
And seeing thus that finite spirits may
Not pierce the veil that hides the Infinite,
He can but manifest Himself to those
Beneath through media on their plane. So, in
Gradation, those above see those below.
Thus is one law applied to every sphere.
These, in the nascence of their being, had
Probationary testing, to impart

A fixedness to fealty. The test
They stood and evil so refused, which was
A cup within their reach that sparkled at
The brim. So they acquired a strength that made
Their will a moral adamant."

Evil—

Evil—evil! How the word rang in me,
To and fro, as though I were a belfry
Where it clanged and lingered—lingered dolefully.
Never before had it so ill a sound,
Or such a sough of mystery in its tone.
Evil I thought impossible; for how
Impurity where purity was throned?
How hell-seed in a soil so like to heaven?
What could be here to give it nourishment?
The thought was in my mind a rankling thorn,
O'er which I needed not to wince in words,
For it was seen by him attending as
At noonday one might see a printed page,
And he discoursed upon the mystery thus:

"Think not of evil as an entity—
A thing created—nor a quality
Or attribute of aught created, nor
Occasioned by the Infinite, save as
The foresight of the possibility
Involved in the creative act, with the
Resultant actuality, is such.
Finite existence is dependent on
The Infinite, from whom its being came;
Whose will is law, obeying which the life
Becomes an ornament of burnished gold,
Or, disobeying, is a blot upon

Creation's brow. Thus, then, evil and good,
As *moral qualities*, are attitudes
Of will toward what is known of God, and willed
To know and do. As *active causes* they
Produce phenomenal effects, as they
Antagonize or are obedient to
The equipoise of universal law.
As seeing is an action of the eye,
Which, closing, darkens, opening, sees the light,
And leads to stumbling or to steady step,
So finite will—the moral motor of
The I—determines finite destiny,
Entailing retribution or reward.
As breathing has no moral quality,
So sin is not nor yet reward to such
As could not otherwise than as they do.
But these intelligences were endowed
With moral power, hence were amenable
To moral law, and as their exercise
Of power their destiny became, since in
Its use they showed their attitude of will,
And grew habituated to, and so
Established in, their loyalty. Choosing
Obedience, they resisted its reverse;
For possibilities of power tempt to
Its willful exercise, which exercise
Is evil as a cause with its effects."

Let ignorance, I said, apologize
For my presumption when I ask, What bar
Could stay benevolent Omnipotence
From making them infallible, that so
Might be an infinite of harmony?

“Are they too low or high to fit thy thought?
Infallible, they had been brutes or gods,
Of law unconscious or superior to.
Not *that* the Infinite would do, and *this*
To do would be to contradict Himself;
Since 'twere to will their independence of
His will. But all besides the Infinite
Is of the Infinite, hence finite and
Conditioned on conformity to law,
Which has essential uniformity,
Its operations in the various spheres
Developing the parts of one vast plan.
Were they infallible, they were above
All other orders of intelligence.
And thus thy question is reduced to this:
Why were not they made more than Seraphim
And Cherubim? As well ask, Why above
The brute? Or, Why not all infallible?
Enough for thee to know: the Infinite
Displays Himself in works of infinite
Diversity, be it in matter, mind
Or moral consciousness and power.
In matter thou mayst see His thoughts expressed
In dovetailed variformity—beauty,
Sublimity and grandeur blent—to be
The scaffolding of life, from which to build
The spirit skyward. So has ever been;
For matter ever was, in infinite
Extension, never more nor less than now.
But matter furnishes benevolence
No object to receive its benefits.
Only through conscious life, from lowest forms

To those upon its highest altitudes,
He manifests His amplitude of power,
Appreciated but by those endowed
With attributes that miniature His own;
As conscience, judgment, moral quality
Of will, their selfhood's crown. These, in
Benevolence, He so creates. Yet He
Himself was never solitarily
Existent, but through the eternal years
His bliss was in benevolent employ,
In modes appropriate to infinity;
Beyond the fact of which our thoughts are lost
Upon a shoreless sea. But this is known:
These beings are; and as their greatness such
Is their capacity for bliss or woe,
Balanced upon their attitude of will;
By consonance of which is harmony."

As lifts

A mist and leaves the landscape laughing in
A lustrous light, so lifted he the mist
That erst had lain upon my thoughts, while yet
The pillars of an old conception fell
From under me, to learn that matter is
Eternal, since I thought this property
Belonged to God alone, when, to relieve
My weak perplexity, he thus resumed:

"While matter is no element of God,
It is the medium manifesting His
Activity. Imagine, if thou canst,
Duration ere the birthdays of the worlds,
With naught existent but the Infinite;
Nothing but spirit, in passivity

From all eternity, eternally
Without the bliss activity affords.
If he was satisfied with such a state,
Why change? If not, why not eternally
As now? His nature was eternally
The same. Enough. He ever was as now.
The revolutions of the wheels of change
Are a continuance of eternal thought,
Hence of eternal action, the result
Of thought, with something to be acted on."

Since, I replied, all forms of things began,
And He, the Maker, was before the made,
A period was when He preceded all.

"Things are expressions of His active thought;
And since He ever thought, things ever were,
Beginnings being but in change of forms,
Beyond which fact a thousand questions rise,
Which to the finite are a labyrinth,
Where thought may wander and be ever lost.
Finites need know no more than what He is
To them in their dependence on His will;
And only curiosity would more.
To man He is revealed in threefoldness,
To meet the threefold aspect of his need—
One God, yet three in personality,
Who ever was and did as now, in the
Expression of His will and character."

But how conceive Him three, I asked, unless
It be as Infinites, three Gods? To which
He thus replied:

"Man is a trinity in one—
A body, mind and spirit. So the brain—
Reason, memory and imagination one.

So God, the source of law, the Go-between
The law and penalty in man's behalf,
And Immanence that links the finite to
The Infinite in steadfast loyalty.
Man needs to look to Him as threefold in
Efficiency, conveyed in threefoldness
Of mode. So would the Infinite assist
The finite toward a comprehension of
Himself. Three Gods implies three minds; and this
That they have separate thoughts and wills and deeds.
But all creation has a unity
Of action, and the selfsame autograph
Of mind and will, attesting thereby that
Who made and rules is One; while, as revealed
To man, there is the cognizance of three
In spiritual operation, which
Is the whole alphabet of what man knows:
And finite mind must have a finite bound.
Since one, they must alike be infinite,
Acting as different lobes of one great brain,
The vehicle of one sole mind. But this
Is liking that which has no like, measuring
An infinite extent with finite span.
The greatest intellects accept the fact
As fact without dissecting it; the less
Would grasp the concept of the Infinite
And make a manikin of Deity,
On which to exercise their ignorance.
Look back to earth and find thy problem there.
What knew a polyp of thy attributes?
Its difficulty and thy own were twins.
To it thou wert a being infinite—

Matter in relative infinity,
With life and its implied activities;
Mind with imagination that creates;
Reason that tests the currency of thought,
With *Memory* as an archive of the past,
And *Spirit* spreading pinions to explore
Infinity; all tenanted within
The selfsame space. How it had tottered in
Approaching thee, and sunk at last beneath
The burden of attempt! But greater is
The distance twixt the Infinite and thee.
Hence why thy totter and thy sinking in
Attempt. Now, in the stress and cramp of thy
Perplexity, know this: the circle of
Infinity no finite mind can square;
Nor diverse worlds are gauged by selfsame rules
Of measurement. Spirit and matter have
Their separate laws, differing in their range
Of possibilities, and each requires
Its own specific alphabet, to be
Its vehicle of thought and fact. Spirit
In matter finds but faint analogies,
So limited the compass of its laws.
Wert thou pure spirit, thou mightst understand
Where Cherubim and Seraphim come short.
But in thy ignorance thou reachest up
As might the polyp reach toward thee, in vain
Attempt to grasp what lies beyond thee. Those,
With natures on the highest finite peak,
See not the mystery's heart whose throb they feel.
Still they indulge no questionings, to make
A ripple on the surface of their peace."

That said, I ventured thus: Thy words imply
That Infinite was pent in finite space;
To which he condescended this reply:

“As Infinite He fills infinity,
And being such, He infinitely does.
Earth is the fraction of a fraction of
His universe, but *all* man’s universe,
Who thinks himself monopolizing the
Attention of the Infinite. But though
He condescends to man’s estate, and in
Epiphany made known His character,
He so was manifested in all worlds,
In guise of their inhabitants, to have
Them, in the spectrum of His mind, blent as
A varihued and yet harmonious whole;
And one eternal method operates.
Hence He is manifested now in worlds
Beyond thy count; and so, as worlds decay,
Dissolve, reintegrate in other forms,
In the activities of endless change,
He will reveal Himself in finity;
Insentients govern by dynamic law,
The lower sentients by impulsive, and
The higher orders by volitional.”

That said, he paused as if to give me time
For thought, when came a sense of blissfulness,
And I was calmed upon a sea of splendor.
Silence was as the spirit of a sound
That had a haunting sweetness of its own,
And peace fell on my spirit softly as
A fleck of moonlight on a drowsy flower,
Or as the sunshine of a pleasant dream.
Was that the gate to endless paradise?



CANTO II



CANTO II

A change—earthward or hellward I surmised.
It was descent to an inferior sphere,
And ended in antithesis from light
To darkness, dense as a cloud dropt on
Us in extinguishment of everything
Save consciousness, retaining which was as
A mockery, the awful silence an
Obsession, or a mourner dumb at
The funeral of a world. At first it seemed
As though existence might be ended with
A gasp, while I had not ability
To give the gasp. I felt, but saw not, my
Attendant's presence. Lacking that, I could
Have wished myself dissolved to nothingness;
For nothing seemed there but myself and he,
Shut in a sepulchre of loneliness.
Moments had kinship to eternity;
And while I wondered whether they would end,
The gleaming of a lurid light appeared,
Moving like serpents having fiery eyes;
And as they slid, accentuating more
The darkness, one by one they coiled themselves
In lettered shapes, of import greater than
When lightning fingers wrote a nation's doom
Amid old Babylonia's revelry.
Too awful were the words for speech of earth.
Immovable and dumb with horror, I
Beheld for period seeming long enough

To sweep the circuit of the dial face
Of time, then turned imploringly toward him
Beside me for relief, when thus he spake:

“What here thou seest is the typic pall
That finally shall wrap this blasted orb,
With those dread characters its epitaph.
No resurrecting trump shall then be heard,
To thrill its vanished glories into life;
Nor sinless ones desire to see its form,
Since this envelopment of darkness is
An indication of the frown of God.
None e'er will pay the tribute of a tear,
Nor even night winds moan its requiem,
But all avoid it with a shudder, as
A spot of all the universe accursed.”

As thus he spake a crawling horror stole
About me, with a snaky coldness, till
I fain had shrieked and fled. But more I feared
To hear myself in such a solitude;
And fixed I was as at the center of
A world, bound by enfettering gravity.
Knowing my trepidation, he withdrew
To where the mitigated darkness was
As the enswathment of a fog when chill
November hugs a northern isle, and gave
A modicum of ease, at which I dared
To speak. Oh! where and what, I asked, the cause
Of this superlative of horror, this
Unhealing sore upon the universe?
Surely the infinitely Good not so
Defaces His own work. Yet who in His
Despise?

“This world,” said he, “was more than fair;
A diamond sparkling in the crown of space,
Peopled by beings in material garb,
Exceeding man in scope of attribute,
To whom the Infinite vouchsafed to be
Upon their level in a perfect life;
Which being emulous to imitate,
He then withdrew His manifested form
And made them wards of an angelic host,
With one of archangelic rank as head,
Who, as their tutors, prompted them to a
Development of all their powers, until
They reached a semi-angelhood, and so
Were fitting for disrobement of the flesh—
The garb of being—to expand their powers
With unentrammed freedom, and themselves,
As angels, minister to others in
A lower sphere. In these conditions was
A test of fealty in him who held
The seal of deputized authority,
Whose greatness proved a great infirmity;
For after he had recognized and bowed
As liege before supreme authority,
He was seduced, by thought sophistical,
To see himself exalted to a sphere
Of independency, yet prompted by
A motive of divine beneficence;
And then he reasoned with himself that, as
Within the bound of his activities
He was an almoner of blessing, and
In blessing blest, a wider sphere would yield
Commensurate results. Then with the cue

That long experience gives, and powers whose wing
Could take a wider sweep, why should those powers
Be cramped within so limited a sphere?
Why deaf to voices of necessity,
Which came to Fancy's ear like voices in
A dream? And why the underleaders and
Their hosts be yawning in the drowse of half
Activity? Such was the treacherous thought,
When Amplifer—than whom no greater is
Beneath the Infinite—was sent to check
The foreseen mental veer, that, thus forewarned,
The deed might bear the penalty of law
Yet leave the culprit dumb. Obeying with
A loyal promptitude, the greater one
Disclosed himself appropriately, and thus
Addressed the less:

“Hail, mighty Lucifer!

Thou art deemed worthy of a mighty trust;
A trust that sheds a luster on thy name,
Since long administered in faithfulness.
I would but aim at equal faithfulness,
To crown my future as thy past is crowned.
Affinity of interests makes us one
In bonds of unifying sympathy,
And blends our thoughts like light from different orbs.
So be our thoughts now blended in discourse.
As known to all the higher powers, there is
An Infinite; and being infinite,
Too great He is for finite eye to see
Or mind to comprehend; whose will is law,
An omnipresent potency, by which
He is engirding and sustaining all

Existences, incorporate in His mind
 As one. And hence one mind, plan, movement, as
 The beating of a central heart, throbs, thrills
 Through all, and, by responsive action of
 The parts, preserves the blissful status of
 The whole. Thus is necessitated due
 Conformity to law of every part
 In its relation to the whole. We who
 Are diademed with highest attributes
 Of being, and exalted to a sphere
 Of glorious and tremendous power, sustain
 Our glory as we thus conform; for should
 We fail, 'twere as the wrenching of two suns
 From out their measured orbits, hurling them,
 By our centrifugal recalcitrance,
 To spheres oppugnant to the general weal;
 So making all oppugnant to ourselves.'

"Here Lucifer replied:

" 'Most worthy peer,

His will whom we have served is law in a
 Generic, ours in a specific sphere;
 His to assign, and ours to act within
 The sphere. Our power implies the right to use,
 The sole condition that we use it well,
 And he possessing must determine how,
 Since his the consequence. Whose motives aim
 At good must please the Good.'

Thus Amplifer:

" 'Thy motives unrelated to His law
 Were worthy of thyself. But we have no
 Such independency. And should the law's
 Demands be flagrantly ignored, the brand

Of treason were across their brow. As known
By thee, existence has diversity,
To give composite grandeur to the whole ;
While sameness were monotonous to Him
Whose hand has made, whose eye is over all.
Hence every part is needful to the whole,
And serves its purpose as it fits its place.
Ours is the honor of a lofty sphere
With corresponding power. Yet is that power
But delegated, by the use of which
To serve His purpose whom we represent ;
That purpose inkled in the sphere assigned.
There the subordinate must reverence the
Supreme, else we condemn, and so conflict,
Braving results ; while, by example, we
Suggest to others as ourselves perform,
Breeding rank anarchy.'

“Here Lucifer,

Aroused as from a lethargy, replied :

“ ‘I have a mind and will. Why, but to use
In the full scope of their capacity,
Without the prompting that a novice needs?
I think, then plan ; I will, then act, my mind
My power, my will my law, within my sphere,
Where I am infinite unto myself,
Acknowledging no bounds that limit my
Activity. In this my nature but
Asserts its right to be my highest self ;
Which He can but approve who wills me well.’

“ ‘He who best wills thee bids thee do His will
But in this bold assertion of thyself,
In mind and will, thou takest no account

Of His, but makest thine supreme; which course
Is arrogant disloyalty, while this
Thy argument were no less plausible
In every mouth. But should it mold all lives—
Think the results, if thou hast mind enough,
And shudder at the thought. O Lucifer!
Beware. Beware of thoughts that are not born
Of loyalty, or they will grow and grow
And bear a deadly progeny. Though great,
Our greatness is the gift of Him who bids
Us serve, and unto whom, as King, we owe
Allegiance, lacking which we are undone.'

"The warning fell upon a barren ear,
Finding no rootage in the mind and will;
For as with man whose predetermined course
Is masked with plausibility, whate'er
His aim, so fair of countenance he saw
The mental monster that was cheating him.
True, he made pause in acting, but no pause
In his resolve—pause to consider how
To act, and to confirm himself in his
Resolve. And while he paused, delusion crept
Insidiously, with deepening darkness, o'er
His mind, as shadows o'er the couch of Night.
Then Amplifer again was sent, to cut
His pride with words of keener edge, and leave
Him more excuseless in persistency,
When thus in controversy they engaged:

"*Amplifer*. 'Hail, mighty Lucifer! I come again,
The Infinite to serve and thee to save.'

"*Lucifer*. 'Save me upon whose nature is impressed
Eternity's imperishable seal?

Save me who am not perishing, and am
A savior great as thou? I take thy words
As levity that underestimates
The due of rank.'

"A. 'Imperishable. So
Thou art; a fact that is the gilding of
A fact—the greater fact, that being is
Not all, nor yet the best of life, which thy
Ambition to attain a higher sphere
Admits. Nor may thy present be the worst
Of life; a fact whose voice demands a pause.
And neither deafness nor a sensitive
Resentment can procure immunity
If disregarding His authority
Whose power sustains the universal frame—
His will the universal law—but that
To brave by breaking this, will bring
A wreck of consequences on the head,
From which can never be escape.'

"*L.* 'Power that
Could hold the worlds as grains of sand upon
Its palm were limited to action on
Material entities; hence cannot with
Annihilation's breath blow out the blaze
Of consciousness; nor stop the play
Of mental force that generates my thought.
Thus in my nature I am greater than
Omnipotence.'

"A. 'Ah, Lucifer! In that
Thy greatness is thy peril, tempting to
Presumptuous confidence. And should it fall,
Its fall will be with heaviest weight and down

To deepest depth. Nor mayst thou shove aside
The fact that, while the physical must fail
To touch the thought and deaden consciousness,
It girts the thinker with conditions that
Affect them both.'

"L. 'Will is the final power
That wields the power, and as His nature is
The will to wield. Then since His nature is
Benevolent, He can but will to have
What is work out its possibilities
In harmony with law's benevolence.'

"A. 'But who shall guarantee the harmony,
Should all minds act in independency?
E'en thine and mine are in oppugnancy.
And shouldst thou canvass in thy own domain,
Would every mind be acting as thine own?
If so, they need not thine to prompt, and so
Thou art a superfluity. If not,
A unit of supremacy is a
Necessity, or chaos would prevail.
But infinitely greater is it where
An infinite complexity obtains.
What, then, are we to aim beyond the sphere
Assigned, and god it o'er the Infinite?'

"L. 'Thy words are caustic with unfriendliness,
And tend to force me to extremities
Of speech.'

"A. 'Nay, say not so. The friend is he
Who shows thy foot the precipice before.
I warn thee of extremity of state,
In which eternity will still preserve
Its seal, but not assure thy state.'

"L. 'I would
Not smut the face of thy intent, while yet
I deem thy words as feathers in the wind.
Adieu!"

"So parted they. Then Lucifer
Moved to and fro, as one in thought immersed,
And as he moved spake thus, half audibly:
'Great Lucifer! so great that other great
Ones bow to thee. Nor greater Amplifer.
Then why this exaltation of thy peer
To act as thy admonisher? Perhaps
By incitation of a readier zeal,
Moving him to a promptitude to seize
An opportunity thou lettest lie
Still dormant in disuetude. Or has
He, by long practice in subreption, so
Himself obtruded on attention as
To gain the confidence and smile of Him
We serve? Or is that One capricious in
His recognition of our service? Be
The reason what it may, thou needest not
Prolong conditions that consign thy powers
To languish in ignoble littleness,
Compared with what I see achievable
In sphere and action. Had he such a zeal,
Or such assertiveness, why mayst not thou,
By doing what will magnify thyself?
Or has the Ruler such caprice, why not
Thou independently assume what He
Can but approve, if by their quality
He tests our deeds, and in augmenting of
Thy bliss add so much unto His, who finds

It in the synchronism of all hearts? -
But should He disapprove? Tut, tut! By a
Necessity of nature He can but
Approve. And yet who knows the limit of
A possibility? But who would shrink
To face the shadow of the possible?
Not mighty Lucifer.'

"So reasoned he

Whose will was toying with the fair deceit,
Not recognizing Amplifer as more
Than peer, since thus accommodated to
His lower sphere. Again the deputy
Appeared as mouthpiece of the Infinite,
And thus renewed discourse:

"Amplifer.

'Great Lucifer!

I come again, assuming that the calm
Succeeding our debate was genial in
Its influence on thy afterthought; since theme
So great, and action so momentous, must
Have magnified to thy conception that
Involved. Thy speech had plausibility,
As though it were a profile of the truth.
But plausibility is that which makes
Deception fair of countenance, without
Which honest natures could not be deceived.
But finite wisdom knows its ignorance,
As real greatness knows its littleness,
And hence its fallibility; and in
That consciousness full oft it modestly
Reviews, revises and reverses what
The judgment prematurely had pronounced;
While little minds know not their littleness,

Hence think themselves infallible. But thou
 Art great enough and hast the courage, to
 Declare thy second thought a step beyond
 Thy first.'

"*Lucifer*. 'There is a super-greatness which,
 Matured its thought, disdains to vacillate.
 Such greatness credit thou to Lucifer.'

"*A*. 'True greatness lends an ear when Wisdom
 speaks.'

"*L*. 'And it determines whether Wisdom speaks.'

"*A*. 'Who wishes well for thee deserves thy ear.'

"*L*. 'None wishes better than I wish myself.'

"*A*. 'But is not He, the Ruler of us all,
 The fount of wisdom and the source of weal?'

"*L*. 'My Reason takes her vessel to the fount,
 And when she brings it full I question not.'

"*A*. 'It may be full, though filled not at the fount,
 Of which I warn thee to beware; to do
 Which I am sent by Him who knows thy thought.'

"*L*. 'None better knows my thought than I, hence
 not

Another's knowledge trust I as my own,
 Which is not misted with dubiety.'

"*A*. 'Beware, O Lucifer, beware! Beware
 Lest Ruin open wide his mouth and gulp
 Thee with a smack.'

"*L*. 'Beware thou lest I have
 Derogatory thoughts of thee, and trust
 Myself the more.'

"Then Amplifer withdrew
 And left him adamantine in resolve,
 When daringly he fashioned thus his thoughts:

“ ‘Speaks he or speaks he not the mind of Him
We deem the Infinite? If *yes*, then thou,
O mighty Lucifer! hast this as the
Reward of thy benevolent intent:
Thy equal is commissioned to convey
Implied rebuke. This comes of being frank
In thought and speech, in which I mirror that
Within. Ah! that within? Then that within
Displeases. Motives that are pure as light,
And aspirations that would gem the crown
Of gods, displease. And why displease? Because
Of quality? If so, less worthiness
Would please, and thou art worthier than the One
Displeased. Or if not that displeases Him,
Thy person is the object of offense,
Because of meager homage to the Power
That is displeased to have thee cherish those
The purest motives and the noblest aims.
Admit this possible, the Infinite
In thought a finite is in fact, and in
His moral character inferior to
Thyself; which granted, we by nature are
Antagonistic in our sympathies,
Which bids thee act in independency.
Or speaks he *not* with due authority,
In fear that I attain preëminence?
If so, thy equal then presumes to arch
Dictatorship, officious insolence,
That, in its ignorance or headiness,
Fancies its thoughts and feelings duplicate
The Infinite’s. But be it which it may,
To aim at good is good; and as thy love

Of good, so be thy aim as worthy of
Thy powers; as worthy, too, thy diligence.
But why this controversy with thyself
In vacillating indeterminence?
This tossing of thy thoughts this way and that
Is an unworthiness in one so great.
Thy thought needs energizing into deed;
For worthy to be thought is worthy to
Be done, and worthy to be done demands
The doing and forbids delay. Here, then, thou hast
Incentive to despatch. This host, which acts
Responsive to thy will, needs but the word
That guarantees the deed.'

"So thinking, he
Delayed not the assembling of the hosts,
Who waited in array to hear their chief,
From whom expecting but instruction as
His wont, when thus he gave half moot to his
Designs:

"Immortal potentates and powers!
Your natures, to benevolence inclined,
Find bliss in blessing less exalted ones,
Who hitherto have readily received
And benefited by your ministries,
Which once engaged the utmost of your powers.
With memory's eye ye see a greater One
Who robed Himself with matter in the guise
Of these to whom we minister; in which
He gave an ideal pattern of the life
Whose copying would exalt their natures till
The glory of the spirit life should shine
Within. Millenniums to millenniums linked

Have formed a chain of habit that has bound
Their characters in righteousness so fast,
Our task of serving them becomes a mere
Monotony of routine, samely as
The twinkling of a star. Thus we are left
With unexpended energy, to which
Extent we miss the end of being, and
Sustain a consequent subtraction from
Our bliss, while others lose the service we
Might render, with its boon. The Great Unseen
Belike has this in mind, yet waits to have
Us take the hint of circumstances as
Befitteth our sublime intelligence;
For surely beings great as we, with sage
Experience whispering commendations in
Our memory's ear, He would not have demean
Themselves as adolescent novices
Who need His prompting ere we move. No, but
The shackles of our semi-dormancy
Must now be flung into the waste-heap of
The past, and henceforth new activities
Engage our minds, new glories crown our toils;
So shall we serve ourselves in serving Him.
And well your service merits His reward,
As long experience fits you to receive
It in a wider sphere of action, which
Will give expansion to your straitened powers.
O'er this my mind has had a brooding care,
And has the purpose formed, with method half
Matured; for whose unfoldment let your minds
Prepare. But it becomes not now to bring
The forming fashion of my plans before

Your mind. Then wait in patience until comes
The opportune occasion to receive
It in its full development, as soon
Ye shall.'

"So cautiously indefinite
His words, their unsuspecting minds were left
To such conjectures of the change designed
As matched themselves in guilelessness, and made
Them fit for acquiescence in advance;
Which favoring prejudice was what he sought,
To steer his craft by it as with a helm.
In this astute insidiousness was threat
Of what might end in recreance, in which
Emergence Gabriel was deputed to
Convey the caution of the Infinite,
And thwart the leader's fell attempt. With glad
Celerity his presence he disclosed,
In clouds suffused with his irradiant sheen,
Toward which the hosts in multitudinous
Array assembled, while the leader kept
Apart, invisible and silent, with
A dubious dignity, expecting what
Might desecrate his ear. All ears attent,
He spake them thus:

" 'Hail, loyal ones! Ye well
Have borne yourselves toward him your Chief,
In worthy loyalty revolving in
A round of service whose concordance had
An action that was as a single mind
In play. So have ye recognized the law
Of unity and order, and insured
The smile of Him who is above us all,

This law it is that binds the worlds in an
Identity of interests as a whole,
From the minutest living thing on to
The glory-presence of the Infinite,
Who, like the central atom of an orb,
Attracts them toward Himself, so each through each
Obeys the central Power. In this your sphere
A race looks up, and through you serves your Chief,
And on through him the Infinite; so ye
With them, and all with you, that One Supreme.
This fact must hold us fast in loyalty:
Serving, we do it through subordinates,
Duty's perspective being Him Supreme.
Should e'er subordinate condemn this law,
(No odds the motive sponsor for the deed),
The act would be centrifugal in its
Effect, a moral dislocation of
Himself, and place him in antagonism to
The universe. Then loyalty would heed
The claims of law, passing him by as made
A suicidal nullity, and do
The Will Supreme; in saying which I but
Remind you of the known. Yet, in the fond
Security of unsuspecting zeal,
Your innocence may need that Duty have
Her mottoes burnished for your eye, while a
True memory iterates the truth ye know,
Lest ye, forgetful, trust a finite prop
As independent of the Infinite.
Continue, then, in loyalty to Him
From whom we all receive our all, and swerve
Not should the highest finite make mistake—

As finite may—and counsel otherwise.'

"That said, a mental chaos raged throughout
The host, some secretly demurring to
The implication of his words; some in
The agitation of uncertainty;
While others drank them as a draught of truth.
For in the higher orders, as with men,
There are no duplicates of intellect
And will. A waning of his glory then
Began, as twilight on a summer eve,
And he returned, his mission so fulfilled."

CANTO III



CANTO III

“As man remembers not his origin,
So Lucifer knew only that he was.
Nor knew he all that finity implied,
Which, though horizoned to his view, was still
Forever reaching into a beyond.
And less he knew of God’s infinity,
Since only Infinite can comprehend
The Infinite. Hence, when his attitude
Was shown as questioning his loyalty,
He paused upon decision’s fateful brink
Ere launching forth to unseen destiny.
Of Amplifer, as twixt himself and the
Unseen, he thought but as a peer (was he
Indeed a representative, of which
He had the affectation of a doubt)
Inferring thence that but a peer would test
His prowess in hostility, except
That Gabriel might oppose, who was no more
Than secondary in his thought; and so
He minimized the Infinite, and in
An insane estimate of strength assumed
An independence and prerogative
Belonging solely to the Infinite.
Moreover, Memory kept her finger on
The pledge, to fail in which would be to own
A fault, and weakness in submitting to
Implied rebuke from one a doubtful peer;
To which humiliation he had not

The suppleness of will to bend. Thenceforth
He drifted from the equatorial line
Of loyalty to zones of wantonness.
And not himself alone, but all the hosts
He took in the embrace of his designs.
So slowly and insidiously were these
Transitions made, they stole as autumn haze
Across the broad cerulean of his mind,
Until he felt emboldened to address
Them all, to blot out Gabriel's words, and then
Enmesh them in his own disloyalty,
To which he gave a more euphonious name;
A name that was as cataract on the eye.
With this intent he summoned them to meet
As tribes, their leaders at their head, who were
Upon a higher plane of being than
The led, having a greater breadth and strength
Of mind, which fitted them to think for and
Suggest, to animate and guide who were
Of kindred aptitudes, while nearer in
Their natures to the race whose ministers
They were. The unanimity of their
Response was as the action of one mind
Moving one set of motors at its prompt.
Belial, with autocratic consciousness,
Was there, ermined as 'twere with light, his task
To prompt their minds to whom he ministered
To walk in grooves of conduct parallel
With universal law. Bacchus was there,
Around whose person flickered glints that played
Like light on water; his to guide who made
Imagination's wilderness their home,

Inciting to persistent onwardness
Toward ideal possibilities. Mammon
Was there, his visage having eagerness
Of look, and on his person such a sheen
It seemed to cling like a close-fitting robe;
His mission to interpret matter as
It symbolized the unseen verities.
And Moloch, too, was there, bright aureoled,
And with effulgence haloing his brow,
As coronating with divinity.
His was to be a mediating link
Twixt earth and heaven; one hand on those he served,
The other reaching toward the Infinite.
And all subordinates were there, to hear
The word of him o'er all the hosts supreme.
These were too multitudinous to count
Or even estimate, their lineaments
In likeness with diversity, but all
Expressing the submissive readiness
Of loyalty to serve. Assembled all,
Their Chief stood in imposing attitude
Upon a mount on which the Day first laid
Its consecrating hand. His majesty
Was as a sun's amid its satellites,
Although eclipsed in condescension to
Their nature's feebleness. Now he would snare
Them with deceptive speech, and thus he looped
The meshes of his guile:

“Ye loyal ones

Whom I have trusted long, am trusting still,
And led in service that has been your bliss,
That loyalty and service are my pride,

And I would gladly advertise them to
A thousand worlds, to make them emulous.
Naught now need blight our mutual confidence,
Nor shall with my consent, connivance—nay,
Without my utmost effort to prevent.
Your ears have heard insinuated what
No bluff audacity would dare assert,
To prejudice the glory of my past.
Beware ye of insinuations, which
Are but assassin darts that Cowardice
From hiding throws at what it fears to face.
Belike a great one spake; for only such
Would have presumed on his offense. But judge
Ye which deserves the greater confidence—
He who has earned it or the one unknown.
It were comparing everything with naught.
What have I said, what done, or you designed
To justify his bold officiousness?
Our motives are the parents of our deeds
And give them character. What, then, are his?
Their character I would not scrutinize.
His dignity of station would forbid
Suspicion of his envying our long
Success and bliss. Yet to conceive aught else
Baffles my ingenuity. Surely.
It is impossible for him to fear
The augmentation of your powers, which my
Supreme desire is to enlarge. Can it
Be possible that he has deputed
Himself to serve the One Supreme, and made
Mistake of what would please? If so, that may
Account for his unseemliness of speech,

And yet extenuateth not the fault
Of his oblique aspersion of myself,
The double edge of which aspersion cuts
As keenly at yourselves (no whit the less
For being thrust with unctious compliment)
As though you could be dupes of artifice.
Such misapprehension on his part would
Excuse a disregard on ours—nay, would
Demand rebuff by our indifference.
Then if my word is worthy of your ears,
My rule commanding still your confidence,
While innocent yourselves from all offense,
Resent ye his officiousness. I say,
Resent it with vehement loyalty.
Resent it as you value future peace.
Resent it as you hope for greater bliss.
As for myself, I shall but snuff at it
In sheer contempt, and trust your future as
I have your past. He spake of law. Of law!
Fitness for service is the soul of law.
Granting the service worthy of your powers,
(And it would diadem so many gods),
I am prepared to lead you to a goal
Of such attainment as will glorify
Those powers in an extended sphere; a sphere
That gives benevolence more godlike scope,
And blesses others as it glorifies
Yourselves. Or were it possible for us
To fail in that I contemplate, you still
Would be your present selves, with nothing lost
Of power or bliss—nay, with enhancement of
Your bliss; for an attempt at good brings halt

The blessing of success. If, then, for such
Attempt we are agreed, speak ye in words
That are the echo of your hearts.'

"He ceased,
When came an outburst of applause whose din
Was louder than the roar when mad winds lash
Earth's deep, and as the yeasty afterswell
Prolonged. The pivot of their destiny
Was in that hour, and as their will should point
That destiny would be. Then Bacchus made
Himself the mouthpiece for his host, stretching
To an unwonted height, and with a pose
That emphasized his dignity became
To every watching eye and waiting ear
The point of gravity, when silence thus
He brake:

" 'Most mighty Chief, and compeers in
Benevolent employ, we know ourselves—
Our natures, aptitudes and powers—as none
Besides can know; the grandeur of our aims,
And purity of motive in those aims,
The worthiness of which needs no attest
And seal to verify our consciousness.
If an Authority there be of whom
The universe attests benevolence,
He can but smile upon benevolent
Activity wherever exercised.
Then since to such benevolence our Chief
Directs, his counsel must be still our guide;
In following which, as past experience proves,
Our duty and our interest lies. Therefore
His will is all I wish to know, that I

May follow whither he will lead, to fail
In which would prove a lack of confidence
With naught to justify the lack.'

"He ceased,

When Moloch forward strode, as one who bent
Beneath the burden of his thoughts, and thus :

" 'Bacchus enrobes a truth in fitting words.
We have a leader who has led us well,
To whom naught tempts us to be recreant.
We may believe there is a Power unseen,
Of presence undefinable, which in
The visible must be expressed, to make
His person real unto consciousness.
Hence is our Leader made Vice Infinite,
Whose words are pregnant with the living thought
Of Him he represents; in serving whom
The boon of all our past has been enjoyed,
And through whom blessings have perfumed their lives
To whom we minister; all which demands
Unfailing fealty.'

"Then Mammon thus :

'I can but second that already said.
What being, niggard to himself, would turn
A blind eye to his opportunities?
To do it were to contravene the law
That is a moral gravitating force,
Drawing the inert to activity
In aspiration and in effort. Such
Comports not with our nature or desire.
From positive to the superlative,
These are steps above which Nature stands
In an inviting attitude, and it

Is ours to mount, with ready foot, without
Deterrance by the dubious voice of one
Unknown. Our leader leads us well.
Then trust his counsel and his reasoning.
Ask, Why is matter so compounded and
Arranged? Why light and heat, except to serve
As ministers to life? And why the gross
And inert substances, if not to be
As corner-stones on which the higher forms
May rest? These tell us, by analogy,
That in this higher realm our being is
Designed for mission that shall match its powers.
Conclude, then, that our Chief's authority
Accords with law, and with His will whom we
Have thought of as Supreme, and bid adieu
To quilllets, seeking no authority
But his, who aims to make our future crown
Our past.'

“Here Belial, with impatience in
His glittering eye, spake in impulsive haste:

“‘Authority! authority is will;
And having righteous will, we have the right
Authority. In that our Chief and we
Are one. It is not worth the breath of our
Debate whether in One is vested power
To rule the worlds; whether an atom moves
Or can be moved without a lever, and
Omnipotence upon the lever's end.
We are as gods unto ourselves within
Our sphere, and as we fill the measure of
That sphere must all who comprehend applaud;
And more when we expand and fill it well;

Such is my mind without prolonged debate.'

"Then Silence drew her mantle o'er the scene,
As all in expectation waited for
Their Chief to make his broach. But he made pause
To have them in deliberative mood,
Ready, like birdlings with an open mouth,
To catch and then digest his words, and by
Assimilation of his thought be one
In his designs. For clearly could be seen
That many minds were turbulent with thoughts
Demurral to his own. These, he believed,
By dulciness of sophistry, might be
Inveigled into acquiescence; hence,
As supplemental to his words, he waxed
In person more imposing, with the sheen
Of an ethereal splendor such as made
Their shining dim. Then with a gravity
Of tone and gesture thus:

" 'Imperial powers!

It gladdens me to have your open ear
And fill it with my commendation of
Your godly zeal in godly work. That zeal
And your achievements prove capacity
To aid the weaker in a wider sphere,
While duty bids you fill the measure of
Capacity; for 'twere unworthy of
Yourselves, your great and growing powers, to have
Their growth exceed their use, not only those
Neglecting whom we ought to aid, but so
Subtracting from our possible of bliss.
He whom we recognize as the Supreme
Has stamp approval on your work, and so

By implication sanctioned what, as His
Sole representative, I now propose.
And I, who know of your activities,
Have noted well your worthiness, of which
Yourselves have honest consciousness. Now, on
The testimony of this trinity
Of witnesses, ye leave the ordeal of
Experiment with all your powers equipt,
In fitness for extended enterprise.
Since both the fitness and fidelity
Are yours—which your beneficence of rule
With its resultant benefits has proved—
Ye may commendably assume the right
To do according to ability.
Reflect and see that what I say is true.
Naught is without some purpose as its goal;
And as its being does that purpose rise
In dignity. Hence must the purpose of
Your being match your powers, which, being those
Of gods, declare your sphere of action, by
This law, a godlike sphere; a sphere that knows
No bound but the periphery of the
Attainable. My worthy object is
To lead you out to that periphery;
In which attempt I all adventure for
Your sakes, your bliss the fount of mine. But halt!
Why thus contend I for prerogative
That the Incomprehensible cannot
Deny? Nay, perfect in the attributes
That fit a God, He can but smile upon
The impulse that impels us to reflect
Those attributes in voluntary deeds.

This to deny would be rank insolence,
Assumption of a higher moral sense
Than He the ideal of the universe.
Then from His character infer His will.
And now behold the pageant of the worlds
Revolving in their silent majesty,
Which in the little routine of our toil
Have been so nearly nothings in our thought,
While here has been the center of our care.
In what a grand superiority
A few outrank the rest, indicative
Of higher orders of inhabitants,
To whom experience in this lower sphere
Has fitted us for higher ministry.
Or some more needy worlds, of lesser scope,
May make appeal to our benevolence,
With such beseeching we may not withstand.
But that or this we must attempt a more
Intense activity; for we have drowsed
Beside the door of opportunity,
Ourselves belittling with a low content,
In limiting the exercise of our
Transcendent powers when able to expand;
As though in lassitude we waited for
A nudge to cross the threshold of that door,
When none there was to give the rousing nudge.
At length has come to me the breath of an
Appealing influence, wafted sweetly from
The azure meads, which prompts me to extend
A sympathetic thought to other orbs;
For which an ample reason may be found
In having perfected our work on this.

This merits our regard; ay, is the nudge
We waited for so long. Then let us rouse
Our energies to godlike wakefulness,
That as in one our powers have been employed,
To its advantage and our bliss, so in
Some other worlds our labors may no less
Result in blessing and rewarding bliss.
Hear, then, what I propose, which is, that I
Engage in high emprise, exploring space,
To find some orb that needs our ministry;
Perchance some close-related group, o'er which
We may preside, where larger duties will
Expand our powers. The possibilities
Inviting us exceed the power of thought
To grasp; for as eternity rolls on,
The widening vision that experience gives
Will show the way to higher altitudes
Of glory in achievement, since the law
Of progress is eternal onwardness,
Whose impetus we feel within, and shall
Forever feel. But knowing not the mind's
Expansiveness, we see not now the far
Circumference of the attainable,
Which gained, we may be as the One we serve.
Then with a laudable ambition let
Our zeal pursue the possible, and prove
Appreciation of our privilege.'

"Amid the echoes of a long applause
His presence he withdrew from sight, as fades
A star when earth is misty-eyed, in hope
That a commingling of their thoughts would make
His words as leaven fermenting in the mass

Of mind. While thus, his monisher appeared,
To roll the thunders of authority,
Since trumpet warnings failed to turn aside
His feet from treason's path; and thus the clash
Of words began:

“ ‘Great Lucifer! too great
For Mercy's heart to let thee fall, if words
May yet avert, I bring a final word
To be a bar across the path to doom.
From footstool creatures, with capacity
To comprehend the will Supreme, up to
The highest throned intelligences in
The highest worlds, obedience is their law,
To break which is the venom-fang of sin.
For thee to sin, thy sin will be as great
As thou thyself. Measure thyself, then say,
That is the sin of Lucifer, and then
Reflect that as the measure of the sin
Will be its penalty.’

“His eye flashed fire
As he indignantly replied:

“ ‘Sin! Sin!
By what authority insultest thou,
In speaking as to one whose bosom is
A cesspool of iniquity, whose heart
Will quake before the shadow of a threat?
Thy estimate of me is insolence.
What am I, what my motives, what my deeds,
That I am thus addressed? My dignity
Of person ought to be a shield against
Thy fierce assault. Know thou that Lucifer
Is much too great to sin. I am my law,

And that I faithfully obey. If thou
Wouldst fill a mission worthy of thyself,
Go to some starling orb and find a worm
That squirms not as thou wouldst, then talk to it
Of sin, and shake a world above it as
A threat; but treat not Lucifer as one.'

"In lofty tone came this reply:

" 'Yea, great
Thou art beside the less. But look thou on
This orb and gird it with thy span. Suspend
It from thy finger by a viewless thread,
And swing it in an orbit that describes
The dial of eternity. Then see
The honor when allowed to speak in low
Humility to Him who dropt it as
A pebble in the ocean of His works.
Nay, view thyself as what thou art, and thou
Wilt measure as a mote before the face
Of some great sun. Then darest thou to place
Thyself in posture of offense against
So great a Power?'

"To this he thus replied:

" 'I do not so, but as a fraction of
A whole I make the working of my will
A fraction of responsibility
For the achievements of the whole, which can
But be accordant with the Will behind
The whole. But where are thy credentials that
Thou monishest with such effrontery?
I, too, would be admonisher, and speak
As thou to me, to fill thy sphere as well.'

"Then came this ultimatum in reply:

'Shouldst thou pursue thy contemplated course,
Events will tell of my credentials when
Thou art undone. No lightsome parleying,
No obfuscating sophistry, will serve
Thee then. Thou mayest close thine eyes and make
A downward plunge in an abyss; but they
Will open then, where naught undoes the done.
One forward step will take thee o'er a verge,
And leave thee mangled for eternity.
Heed, then, my word, or heed it not, it is
No less His word who knows thy inmost thought.
And has an arrow ready for the bow.'

"Without formality or further word,
He left the traitor to decide his course,
Which, as observed by the Omniscient One,
Was in defiance of the warning given,
While there he cogitated and resolved,
Though not with open contumacy, but
Enveiled behind will-woven sophistry,
The shuttle of whose utterances played thus:

"'Conditions put my mettle to the test,
By forcing me to face my real self;
For here there is no static state between
Alternatives. Backwards or forwards is
The voice of the imperative, and my
Response will be the voice of Lucifer.
Backwards is what? Confession to myself
That I am weak, fearing the unseen force.
Confession to the hosts that he who leads
Can vacillate, has erred and is unsafe
To follow, until they, upon the bench
Of judgment, have cross-questioned and approved,

Which were to abdicate authority
And be their secondary in esteem.
That chosen, I should be myself no more,
But a rejected shard of dignity.
Forwards is what? Ah! if I only knew!
But knowing not, it may be but a screen
That hides a cipher bugaboo. Shall I,
Then, who would dare to face realities,
Start back from an imaginary naught?
I heard a voice, a threat. Of whom, or what?
What better ear has he than I to hear
The One unseen? Or why be trusted with
A menace to be thwacked above a peer,
Whose heart inurns the very essence of
Benevolence; whose deeds are stars that stud
A record worthy of a god? Shall I,
In palpitating hesitancy, stand
And shiver on decision's brink, when all
Heroic motives urge me from behind?
Could I look on such poltroonery and say,
There, that is Lucifer? No. It would be
None other than an effigy of lies.
Were there a thousand risks, my word would be,
Advance! But risk is none.'

"While yet he mused

The hosts were summoned to the parting ways
Of destiny, to make eternal choice,
As rushed before them such a flashing light
It seemed a meteor flung from out the sling
Of the Omnipotent, and in its midst,
As vested by it, Gabriel stood and spake:
" 'Immortal powers! Immortal! Plumb the word.

Spread out the pinions of your thought and sweep
The ocean-surface of its import, which
Is shoreless as eternity. What now
You do will have eternity's broad seal
Of consequence in blessing or in curse.
Think of your whence. Ye are by pleasure of
His will whose finger pointed out your sphere,
And by whose providence you have the power
To will and do. Think of your whither should
You trust a finite guide, rejecting Him
On whom your state depends, in doing which
You brave the prowess of Omnipotence.
Choose now your destiny. Whose will is fixed
In loyalty to Him the head of all
Existences may now have loyalty's
Reward, by rising to a higher sphere.
Then stay or follow as I lead the way,
Obeying finite or the Infinite.'

"That said, there was a sound as when on earth
A cyclone in its wrathful arms tears up
A forest by the roots, and makes the ground
Quake with the following crash. Such was the din
Of the commotion as the loyal and
Disloyal separated, those from these,
Departing as convoyed by Gabriel to
The harbor of a higher destiny.
Then Lucifer, in his astonishment,
Remained concealed, while gazing on the scene
As they vanished in the vasty deep.
The moment was supreme in its demand;
For since his sophistries had failed on those,
Where was assurance of success with these,

Whose minds received the shock of this example?
That, thought he, which had held could hold them still,
If plied with promptitude; hence he disclosed
Himself anew, when all the leaders hailed
Him with applause, and their subordinates
Were cheered as when the sun's full glory bursts
Upon the earth through winter clouds. The guise
Assumed was such it magnified him in
Their eye to godlike dignity as thus
Addressing them: 'Gone. Whither—who can tell,
Save that they vanished in the boundlessness
Of space? Gone—credulously trusting in
The word of one unknown, from certainty
To an uncertainty, themselves divesting of
The glory that so long had haloed them,
Distrusting him through whom their glory came,
Reflecting on your judgment who remain,
Pranking themselves as wiser than the wise,
While acting foolisher than common fools.
But they have furnished opportunity
To prove your loyalty; a loyalty
That stands firm as the foot of Fate. Belike
They are illusioned with the prospect of
Some special favor from the One unseen;
Perchance as eleemosynaries at
His feet to gain some gracious dole. But soon
They may be spewing curses on the head
Of him who lured them into recreance,
While we have independent monarchy
O'er worlds that bless our rule.'

"No time
Was given for further word before he felt

A quaking of the ground, the atmosphere
Aquiver, with cyclonic murkiness
Prognostic of some ill phenomena,
As though the hand of the Omnipotent
Might be foreshadowing His wrath.
All shuddered with premonitory dread;
And as they shuddered, every one beheld
His fellow's countenance, as still and mute
As Guilt before the Judgment bar. Then came
A growing tremor, as a palsy of
The atmosphere, with shivering of the orb,
As though an agued palm were holding it—
To which their fears responded with a groan—
Succeeded by a shock that smote, as 'twere
A thousand lightnings twisted to a whip
That the Almighty thwacked in thunder fit
To split a world, and laid them prone and dumb,
The leader writhing in discomfiture.
And ere they dared to take an upward look,
A blast—as though the worlds had marshaled all
Their winds to sweep with concentrated force—
Bore them in its resistless arms, nor left
A solitary vestige of that host
Whose proud puissance was but treason's dream.
Then, in the rushing fury at its heels,
Was heard, in thundrous tone, the word, DEPART!
So in the cataclysmic ruin, down—
Down—down they went in bottomless engulfment.
There, like a swirl of leaves in autumn woods,
They all were witherless in impotence,
With naught to mark duration, which was a
Monotonous attenuation of

Existence, twin to nothingness, except
As they had power to think and feel; and this
They had in an acute degree. So there
They were, confused as one astray where shines
Nor sun nor moon in pathless woods, hoping
For some retreat from the avenging Power
That seemed to haunt whichever way they looked.
While thus with them, they on the orb, who had
Not felt the scath that drave the spirits thence,
Were borne away as finished gems that leave
The lapidary's hands, for service in
A higher sphere. Then the deserted orb,
In bilious agony, belched fire and smoke,
And rolled its flaming vomit o'er the plains.
The oceans were convulsed and lashed the land;
And that grew pestilent with deadly fumes,
When Devastation stampt out every trace
Of life. Thus was a rendezvous prepared,
In which the Infinite would sharpen sin's
Rebuke. The outcasts meanwhile saw but clouds
Where erst had been the orieny of hope;
And Lucifer, more clearly than they all,
Saw the humiliation of their state,
Hence kept himself a while invisible,
To hide the perturbation that perforce
Expressed itself as passion-fever in
A human face. And as the longer he
Endured inaction he increased in his
Oppugnance unto what he deemed the cause
Responsible for that inaction, and
At length resolved on open conflict with
The unseen Power that he had erstwhile served;

Indulging which heroic mutiny
His nature thus became infernalized.
Then he disclosed his presence to the hosts,
Who greeted him with cold applause, and made
His purpose known.

“ ‘Ye loyal powers,’ said he,
‘Who dare an independence of the will,
Conditions that environ us reveal
These lamentable facts: There is a Power
Unseen whose nature is opposed to that
Benevolence so native to ourselves.
He therefore is opposed to us, because
Of what we are, and would coerce us with
The utmost rigor of dynamic force.
But we are past the bounds of His domain,
And henceforth rest on the decisive fact
That what we are we shall forever be,
Therefore be ever in oppugnancy.
Reflecting on the fact, I have resolved
To search for some location posited
In space, in which to have supremacy,
And whence to operate in grandeur of
Attempt.’

“Then burst their rapture as a flood
And left them flushed with high expectancy,
When he began a solitary flight
Into the unhorizoned space, where worlds
Were glittering countless as the wavelets on
A moonlit sea, as though a cloud had left
Creation’s face. As in a wilderness
Of vastness lost, he viewed the scene awhile
Uncertainly. What Power or Ruler swayed

Authority in each and all? At length
His eye was drawn to one whose blackness seemed
A full eclipse, and thitherto he sped,
And found it was a widow in her weeds.
Passing the veil, he viewed the face. Mountains
There were all bare and scarred and riven, and vales
With cooling lava crusted o'er, and plains
That stretched away in bleak immensity,
And caves whose black mouths opened monstrously,
Where ghosts of wind made melancholy moan;
And all were dry as some great desert's heart.
He viewed it not fastidiously, content
To have it as a stepping-stone from which
To leap beyond, while glad withal to find
It tenantless; hence he returned to make
Report. His presence known, a shout of joy
Went up, and all were eager to receive
His word, when thus he gratified their ears:
 "Degraded potentates and fallen powers!
Degraded, fallen, did I say? Ay, in
Intent of One who drave you hither by
The force of physical phenomena;
But who, instead, ennobled you and freed.
Severed you are by His obnoxious power
From past environment. But selfhood in
An independent sphere is godhood that
Can glorify environment, even
To making hell a heaven; and selfhood still
Is yours, wanting but some activity,
Unhampered by ignoble servitude,
To gain an ideal state befitting gods.
Toward this we now may take initial steps,
Since I have found an orb untenanted,

Insuring whereness as a rendezvous
From which to operate. Naught has it that
Would please a sensuous eye, since darkness wraps
It as a robe without, though all is light
To spirit eye within. Nor any form
Of life is there, hence naught to meet the wants
Of life. But there is liberty, and scope,
In which Endeavor may expand her wings,
And what was meant for bane be made a boon.
Then let us thither and prepare our minds
For exercise that suits our dignity.'

"Then flashed o'er every countenance a ray
Of rapture such as hope might give in hell,
And with the flash a clearing of the sight
That localized the orb, to which they hied,
As by the prompting of one eager will,
Thanking the skill of Lucifer for its
Discovery, suspecting not that it
Was purposed by the Infinite to lead
Them as the harbor-lights the mariner.
Nor recognized they it as their erstwhile
Abode, so desolate it was. But there
Was a designed congruity between
Their nature and the new environment.
So was it that the orb became a blot
Upon the scroll of space, a monument
That tells of law enforced; and as a buoy
That warns the wary mariner, so is
It to the spirits as they pass. This is
The orb, and it was made their rendezvous."

Thus much disclosed, I felt a restlessness
To leave the accursed vicinage, as one

Would flee the hatchery of a plague. This he
Perceived as readily as one perceives
A frown, and thence withdrew to where we still
Could see the huge deformity. But while
We saw, and though defilement, odor-like,
Still clung to me with pestilent tenacity,
I felt as when a stuffy atmosphere
Is left for mountain air. Then I perceived
That his effulgence had diminished, and
A quality was lost to me, bringing
Me nearer the material grossness of
The earth. To him 'twas as a tarnish from
The atmosphere; in me, an influence that
Debased. Yet not on these concentered I
My thoughts, which found a stronger magnet in
The deeds and doom of those revolted ones.

CANTO IV



CANTO IV

The atmosphere that still surrounded us
Was laden with an exhalation that
Produced a sympathetic mental gloom,
As in the flesh a winter rain, my thoughts
The drip-drop of the mind, when I presumed
To ask how long they were in that duress.

“Being unfit for ministry,” said he,
“They had a period measureless, in which
They wandered to and fro in anxious quest
Of some less blasted spot upon the orb
Than first they found, some restful oasis;
But all was wrinkled, black, repulsive as
The skeleton of Death. Then, to escape
The haunting sense of lonesomeness, they thronged
Together, when with horror each beheld
The general change of aspect as his own;
For every countenance had lost the beam
Of bliss that erst had been a tinge of heaven
Illuminating it, and all its light
Was hidden by a cloud that gloomed within.
For greater was the inner change than that
Without. Released from long activities,
Their thoughts were born with mental pangs, and
showed
The parentage of a rebellious mood.
The past, the present and the future were
Dark thunderclouds that met within their minds,
Smiting their natures with electric force

That left black ruin o'er their moral powers.
Now they exposed the inner working of
Their nature as, in conscious helplessness,
They turned resentfully, in mood to smite
An unseen—what? A power? A person? The
Two dubious make-believes once looked upon
As deputies, or One enthroned behind?
Behind their scath a wrathful fury raged;
Behind the wrath a Will, which must imply
A person, having vengeful attributes
And power to execute; of which they had
Been advertised, and now were made aware.
To such conclusion all their reasoning led.
Then to their minds that Power became their Foe,
Whose mightiness, as thought their Chief, though
great,
Could do no more than what was done, or they
Had been debarred a refuge on that orb.
It was, however, as with theirs compared,
Omnipotent. Was power His only, or
His dominating, attribute? Since all
Unknown, as He himself unseen, no shaft
Had they with which to reach the bosses of
His mightiness. While wandered thus the Chief
And followers in a mental labyrinth,
They fain had gathered from the wreck of their
Estate enough to simulate the past.
Yea, they would glorify damnation by
Their hate of Him its cause; for even the
Activity of hate might be preferred
To stagnancy of being that would lie
In craven passiveness beneath the foot

Of Power. While thus the led, their leàder, hurled
From starry height of bliss, found hadëan depth
Of woe, where darkness wrapt black thoughts around
His mind, and evil fouled him with its fumes.
Where was the gauzy sophistry that had
So fair a look? Where the puissance that
Had made him so deific to himself?
The braggart speech of independency,
And all the glory of his leadership?
All seemed like mocking faces looking in
At Memory's door and crying out, Ah, ha!
Thus were the plumes of his pretense torn off
And flung into the face of those who erst
Had bowed as to a great infallible.
In pride's resentment of indignity
He registered a vow within his heart
To prove himself unconquered, marshalling
His powers for such activity as would
Restore their confidence and minister
To bliss. But what activity against
The Power that had already laid him low?
One less, interrogated so, had cowered.
Not he, who viewed the obverse aspect of
Conditions. Thinking godhood wrapt within
Himself, he mentally soliloquized:
“‘Whatever else I have or have not, here
I have monarchic independency,
And a domain of breadth to satisfy
A god, with subjects who acknowledge me
On knees of reverent loyalty; and I
Have selfhood's conscious dignity, which is
The vital element in dignity. What need

I more? These mountains, plains and caverns, were
They black as concentrated smoke, or bright
And charming as the light in Beauty's eye,
Were merely items of environment
In which is nothing of the I. My thoughts,
My motives, purposes and deeds—these are
The real I. And as their purity
And greatness am I pure and great. Hence in
Myself is heaven, though all around were hell.
What reck I, then, environment, and hate
That burns with fury in another's breast,
Save to reciprocate with greater hate?
Were all the worlds as jewels on His brow,
He still must be uneasy in His pride.
But be He, do He, what and as He may,
I am forever indestructible.
And should he be omnipotent, He can
But touch my state and leave me to contend,
In bold defiance of Omnipotence;
To do which circumstances prompt; a prompt
That I shall prove myself most prompt to heed;
For I were not myself, in craven abjectness
To leave my powers inactive as the dust
Beneath my feet. I must arouse, assert
And vindicate myself, and so resent
The insolence of this unjust estate;
For only so can I be worthy of
Myself; and only so can they I lead
Have their existence tolerable, and
Have reason for continued confidence.
Aught less involves eternal vassalage,
The very thought of which would vitalize

Insensate matter, bidding it arouse
To mutiny, and give the bones of Death
A shock of sensibility to be
Resistant. And shall Lucifer do less;
Great Lucifer, a god whom lesser gods
Are proud to serve? No, no! That shall not be.
While will and mind remain it shall not be.
While I am still myself it shall not be.
And with these mighty hosts it shall not be,
But demonstration shall be given that we
Have elements of greatness left that dare
Resist the tyranny of power. Greatness?
What greater is than power to will, with mind
To plan and courage to perform such deeds
As craven natures dare not think of? Such
Hast thou, such they who do thy beck and bid.
Then rouse thee, mighty Lucifer! and ye
Immortal powers, whose ears are waiting for
His word. So shall we, and without delay.'

"So spake he mentally, and as he spake
He thought his greatness unimpaired, and deemed
The scourging Power whose hand had laid him low
As a gone tempest that had spent its force,
And left its fury lulled to satisfied
Inaction. Then he made a mirror of
Himself, and, looking in, imagined he
Beheld the Infinite, a foe to be
Opposed. Thenceforth his mind was rolling to
And fro upon a rushing tide of thought,
Which bore him ever farther from the course
Of rectitude, until, in arrogance
Of will and effort, he arrayed himself

Against the Infinite. So Amplifer's
Prophetic words came true in treason's growth.
Then he aroused, on dreadful purpose bent,
And, signalling his followers to attend,
Disclosed himself in aspect terrible,
As though a bodied tempest mantled in
A thundercloud, yet silent as a shadow.
So he assumed the majesty of an
Infernal god, as in defiance of
The Power whose wrath had smitten them, and stood
Upon a mountain top, rock-like in pride,
As might befit the final of its peak.
And there he raised the standard of revolt,
Around which thronged his hosts in circles to
Its base, and multitudinously thence,
Rank beyond rank, with ears that hungered for
The words that yet might vitalize their hopes.
One hand he slowly raised, and after pause
That gave a prefatory emphasis
To what should follow, thus proceeded, in
A voice that seemed to lash the living sea
With hurricane impressiveness:

“Ye gods—

As gods ye are who thus as gods endure
What would confound, annihilate aught less—
As victims of His jealousy to whom
We offered a profusive loyalty,
How shall I name the deed whose purpose is
To punish virtue as a fault? or we
Devise a merited return whose wont
Has been to cherish godliest thoughts and mold
Them into deeds? Eternity would be

Too short, too weak the arm of Justice; to
Avenge the wrong. We can but meet it with
A protest of resentment, showing thus
Our sense of dignity; a dignity
Inherent, indestructible by place
Or circumstance; a dignity withal
Whose courage is its guard. View not yourselves
As fallen, but as risen from vassalage
To freedom: and one hour of freedom has
More worth than an eternity of bondage.
Ye who were angels now are gods; gods, with
The opportunities that freedom gives
To prove yourselves. Then show your greatness by
A firmness that disdains to bend the knee.
True greatness greatest is when flinching not
To face the brunt of adverse circumstance.
Yourselves know well with what benevolent
Intent your minds were actuated, and
Because of which His choler was aroused
To vent the venom of His wrath on us.
Thus are we victims of a good intent;
While He, as enemy of that intent,
Proves us the friends and Him the enemy
Of good, and since the enemy of good,
The enemy of us, compelling to
An attitude the opposite of His;
An attitude that is but self-defense.
Thus are we brought to face the tyranny
Of power—dynamic force, whose grip it is
That makes Him monarch of material things;
The one sole prop that despots lean upon,
Whose vaunting glory is its infamy.

But let not Him who smites exult, nor we
Who feel despair. His exercise of power
Invites us to reciprocate. Invites?
Nay, more—demands! And our ability
To make reprisal bars contempt. Our state
Betrays the animus of tyranny,
And teaches to oppose, and in the skill
Of our opposing prove that strategy
Defeats dynamics in the end. There is
A small success in little things that has
Less glory than defeat in great attempt.
The one conduces to a mean content;
The other spurs to ultimate success.
Be ours the glory of the great attempt,
In which the lash of our vicissitudes
Incites to action, and inspires with hope—
Ay, Hope that laughs when Fortune's face is glum,
As well we may; for verily His wrath
Has reached the utmost boundary of His power,
Since worse He willed, but could not as He would,
Or He had hindered our discovery and
Possession of this orb, and kept us in
The solitudes of space. Here, then, we find
The nadir point of our extremity,
From whose abysmal depth we may ascend
And emulate His spirit and His deeds,
By giving as He gives—our wrath for wrath,
And havoc vented as He vents on us;
In which be His the blame, if blame there be,
Should we depart from what benevolence
Would prompt. But deeds the offspring of constraint
May be the left hand of benevolence;

A protest and defense when evil strikes, -
And ill be thus the antidote of ill,
A local evil serving general good.
Then let us recognize the pressure of
Necessity, and yield to its behests,
Without the qualmish hesitation that
Would feel the pulse of deeds for which He is
Responsible by whom compelled. Our state
Is in oppugnance to our nature. So
Must be our deeds to gain our normal state.
Prepare, then, for aggressive enterprise.'

"Then came the shock of an applause that shook
The mountain to its base, and thrilled him like
A trumpet blast that is a tingling fire.
Silence at length restored, he thus resumed:

"'In past activity we found our bliss,
For lack of which we now are languishing;
Which fact suggests that we our past renew.
Hear, then, what I propose: This orb shall be
Our rendezvous, from which to operate;
Its face a symbol of the Unseen Power
That stands across our path; the sight of it
A stimulus to meet that Power, and in
Antagonistic effort thwart His plans,
If necessary to enforce our own.
And should we gain not all we seek, in mere
Activity will be a good reward;
For thoughts, desires and efforts outgrowths are
Of consciousness, and consciousness is that
Which constitutes the elemental self;
Hence in their action is the gist of life.
As erstwhile said, there are inferior worlds

Where, in accordance with adaptive law,
Are lower orders of intelligence,
To which we may give needed ministry.
Some may be governed by appointed powers,
And others be in independence of
Extraneous power, to whom we might be gods.
Or some may be in newly-fashioned garb;
Among which may be found some lesser orb,
To which, our mission filled, we may ascend
As laudable ambition points the way.
If wields our Foe authority in all,
Some may be reached and led to fling aside
His rule, and so be meshed in riotous
Entanglement as to frustrate Him in
His government, and make Him recognize
Our power, and tolerate us passively.
But blow the winds as may, I am resolved
To launch upon the empyrean sea,
Returning not until I bring report
Of such discovery as invites to high
Attempt. Then we shall prove ourselves.'

"That said,

A billow of enthusiasm rolled across
That living sea, and dashed in plaudits at
His feet. For every one was magnetized
By his audacity of speech to feel
An eagerness for venturous emprise,
Becoming brave of heart. Then, deferrent to
Their compliment, he bowed and waved his hand,
To signify his readiness, when came
An encore in approval, and he left
As slowly as an exhalation on

A summer eve, flashing the light of his
Residuent glory on their vision thrice,
With quavering vividness, decreasing like
A meteor's trail, and all stood gazing at
Its vacuous wake. When gone, they felt a sense
Of lonesomeness, yet had an eagerness
Of hope that viewed such possibilities
As Fancy throws upon the canvas of
The mind, and grew elate. When vanished from
Their view, he poised in hesitation as
He gazed upon the glittering glories of
The worlds, then plunged into abysmal depths
With the uncertainty of one who casts
A lot invoking partiality
Of chance, or as Genoa's daring son
On unknown seas, but chartless, compassless,
In hope that some among the numberless
Might hail his advent as they felt him near.
Still wavering in uncertainty a while,
He was as one becalmed midsea with not
A mental breeze to waft his will and bear
Him to his destiny. One orb above
The rest conspicuous fixed his gaze, to which
He fain had ventured; but its glory so
Repelled him that he felt a blushing sense
Of littleness, and sped to hide himself
In the immeasurable deep. At length
He spied another orb, less glorious, still
Of royal grandeur in effulgence, which
Approaching, Amplifer appeared as an
Obstructor in his path. 'What seekest thou,'
He asked, 'who hast betrayed thy trust?' Without

A word he took a tangent course, and sped
As one might try to flee the shadow of
Himself, to reconnoitre elsewhere.
Awhile the thought of Amplifer was an
Obsession coming twixt himself and what
He sought, with a repellant influence that
Incited to increasing weariness;
And more that every orb was guarded by
A peer in rank, whose loyalty was his
Rebuke. Hence he pursued his quest, content
To find some humbler, if unguarded, orb,
Impelled by failure to persistency.
At length some planetary orbs he saw
Circling around a central source of power,
The least of which was large enough to fill
His measure of ambition, which by this
Had shrunk to match the possibilities."

CANTO V



CANTO V

“Not unobserved were all the motions of
The fiend—as such he has become—nor was
The object of his quest unknown, nor yet
His after-efforts unforeseen, with their
Concatenation of results, to which
Was offered no impediment by Him
Who could have cleft the largest world and slapt
Him at the center in imprisonment.
Behind this tolerance was an infinite
Onreach of purpose, all inscrutable
To man, who sees the leaden dawning of
Events, but not the golden sunset of
Results, which prove the evil valet to
The good: of which in ignorance the fiend
Kept up his quest persistently, without
Suspecting a surveillance, till he reached
An orb but newly brought from out the mist
Of a chaotic night, teeming with types
Of life upon its lowest levels, while
In lavishment supplied with every means
Adapted to a higher type. The orb
Was beautiful, though small as beautiful,
Adorned with variegated verdure—hills
Where scented breezes gamboled playfully;
Valleys where silence dreamed in sweet repose;
Streams that were arteries flush with liquid life,
And seas that nightly murmured lullabies—
In harmony that seemed to indicate

The purpose of creative mind. He paused,
And viewing it with quering wonder, thus
Indulged in a soliloquy: 'Oh, fair!
Ay, exquisitely fair—a jewel to
The eye! Whence? Had the unseen elements
A virile potency to gender it
In chaos, or some intellectual Power
Conceived and fashioned it to please His eye?
Is it complete, or but a skeleton
Of what is planned, for occupancy by
Some higher, yet unfinished, type of life?
Or model for some more stupendous worlds?
If product of an intellectual Power,
Is he in independence as a god?
But how could less produce this godlike work?
Enough. Howe'er it came, or whence, or who
Its maker or the purpose in His mind,
It offers to reward my quest. Be it
Untenanted by worthier orders, we
May occupy it as our rendezvous,
From which to prosecute our worthy aims.
Or should I find a race in embryo,
Upon a more exalted plane, I may
Develop it to match the ideals of
Our own benevolence. But should I meet
With an obstructing force, in questioning
Of my prerogative, that may compel
A conflict of decisive import to
Myself and all the loyal hosts, by whose
Attritions we may burnish all our powers,
And fit ourselves for more extended rule.
Tut! why see shadow where no substance is;

Interrogate the earless and await
An answer from the tongueless void? Here is
A couch where Peace reclines herself, not an
Arena for the clash of strife. Ay, and
The very atmosphere is slumbrous with
Tranquillity. I must investigate.'

"At once he soared to a contiguous mount,
To view the varied scene, still hesitant.
Should he remain inactive, in suspense
Waiting and watching for developments,
Or pry at once into conditions, and
From them interpret Fortune's horoscope?
To wait would be to court a weariness
Indefinite. But that he would not brook;
For action was the watchword in his mind.
So then along meridian lines he went,
As space by measurement is known to man,
With searching eye, since less familiar yet
With matter as on earth composed than mind
And spirit, and intent withal to learn
The utmost of the orb. At length he spied
A spot, the fairest gem where all was fair,
Where Silence and the Dew were twins, on whose
Calm bosom Night and Peace reposed till Day
Awoke a dreaming world to dancing life.
There was the birthplace of four liberal streams
That bore luxuriance in the fructuous hands.
The ground was plumey with an emerald sward,
Save where umbrageous clumps of fruited trees
Spread out their hands to catch the mellowing heat;
Their fruit so rich in tempting lusciousness
He could have longed to have a sensuous taste.

Amid the rest was one conspicuous most,
Whose fruit contained the quintessence of life,
So he who ate thereof should never die.
And still another, fairest to the eye,
Whose tasted fruit would fatal knowledge give.
Frisking in happy wantonness among
The mazy groves, or with a somnolent
Content cropping the verdant glebe, were groups
Of divers creatures in unfearfulness;
On which he looked as but the overflow
Of a deep-channeled effluence of life,
Existent or designed; for such profuse
Purveyance evidenced a coming need.
Leading to these conditions there had been
Successive stages of development,
Ere time was known by solar measurements.
Then days were steps in the creative work
Until the tropic earth was teeming with
Gigantic creatures batten on the lush
Luxuriance, whose lavishment was in
Anticipation of the earth's old age.
This done, the atmosphere, the sea, the land,
Were modified to suit a godlier type
Of life, and man appeared, invested with
A dominant authority; and then
The Sabbath of the Infinite began—
The work complete as fashioned in His mind—
Symbolic of the rest that man would need.
'Mid the reposeful quiet of the scene
Came Satan, cautiously, and as a hawk
Above the unsuspecting quarry lay
He on the air, when he beheld, embowered,

A being worthy to be monarch of
The rest; of form erect, his eye aglow
With spiritual fire, the index of a soul.
His person was commanding to the eye,
His nature so above the rest that all
Looked up to him as to their head, and he
Was happy to be recognized as such.
For He who fashioned him pronounced him good,
Since like, as of, Himself in attribute.
As there the Arch Foe paused, he queried thus
Within himself: 'Whence? how? for what? *Whence?*

ask

The wind its whence. 'Twill answer soon as he,
With equal certainty. But this is clear:
Naught is but by originating power,
A greater than, and a preceder of,
Itself. For less brings not a greater than
Itself, nor equal more than multiplies
The life that it received. Hence he is by
A greater than himself, an almoner
Of life with intellect and will; and this
Impies a super-intellect and will;
And these a personality, who has
A purpose and a plan. *How* came he thus?
By exercise of will and intellect
And power by Him the final cause. *For what?*
I would the factors of the problem were
In sight. Instead, there is a row of naughts,
In dumb unmeaningness, and I must grope
Along the dark meanderings of surmise.
Is he the mentor of the lower ones,
To bless himself by their development?

Or the initial of a teeming race
Provided for in this redundancy?
And will they follow as this leader came,
Or he be reproductive on and on?
Is he in independence, or in bonds
To homage the originating Power?'

"These questions thought, he ventured an approach,
To mark the operations of the mind—
Its moods and tendencies of thought—and thence
Demark the scope of its capacity;
The inclinations and the strength of flesh;
Its helmlike power to act upon the Will
And give his deeds their moral character.
Nor strange it was that, in his ignorance,
The Adversary queried thus, since round
This one his future might revolve, and mark
The record of eternal destiny;
The one who germed the potency of all
The world's unfolded mightiness. Egypt
And Babylon, and Greece and Rome, with all
The buds and fruitage of millenniums to
The end, were there. And a precosity
Of genius that commanded speech and the
Distinctive attributes of all that breathed,
Imparted an initial impetus
To progress that should ever thrill the nerves
Of Time. Albeit there was in his heart
A vacuum naught beneath himself could fill.
His inner self was in a solitude,
Where not a thought could answer to his thought,
Nor heart beat rymthmically with his own.
Nor was there yet the multiplying means

To furnish that for which the earth was formed.
This inner lonesomeness the Foe perceived
With an increasing curiosity,
And noted every motion of his mind,
The flutter of emotional desire,
And preferential tread in his pursuits,
Until the day was waning and a tint
Of twilight veiled the scene, and musky dew,
With moonlight in a silent partnership,
Fell softly as a benediction from
The lips of Peace. Such hours might soothe the flesh
And fill the brain with waltzing fantasies;
But in the foe they stimulated thought
To count his time of coming opportune,
In furnishing an open door, through which
To pass to roseate possibilities.
While thus he watched in vague expectancy,
The lone one sank into unconsciousness,
Occasioning a new perplexity.
Did flesh cause weariness of spirit? Was
The darkness as a mental sedative?
Or was this anæsthetic influence to
Prepare for some perfecting touch? While thus
He queried, lo! a most amazing sight,
In the evolving of another self
From him the living yet quiescent form.
For so had been the Maker's purpose to
Provide a complemental self, in whom
Should be the propagative function and
The less monarchic qualities that make
The nature lovable, so each to each
Might be a fond necessity, and form

Of twain one perfect self. And hence, when Sleep,
With kindly finger, gave his senses an
Oblivial touch, from out his side a rib
Protruded, which developed into form—
Himself in duplicate except diverse
In sexual attribute—in loving which
'Twould be himself he loved, and so would love
Have surest guaranty (for who of all
Mankind loves not himself?) which had not been
Had she been fashioned from the earth direct.
The simple thus became a complex life,
Possessing procreative potency,
In which were all the treasures of a race.
The fact of the phenomenon was clear
To Satan's eye. But when he sought the cause,
And pondered on the mystery of life,
He launched upon an ocean of surmise.
The physical evolved another self,
With individual consciousness and all
The attributes of personality.
Did thought-force generate the power of thought?
Or did the physical itself possess
The generative power? Did spirit-force
Add spiritual selfhood to the flesh,
Or some extraneous power impart
The spirit element from other source?
Would such a force forever operate,
Or spirit reproduce after its kind?
Was this diversity of sex designed
To be a propagative mode by which
To multiply a race as he
Beheld in lesser forms? He only could

Surmise and wait the answer of the years."

Here in presumptuous ignorance I checked
The progress of his narrative thuswise:
How strange that at one bounding step
Should come a whole, and that of sex diverse.
Earth's latest thought makes life progressive, from
A protoplasmic germ through beast to man.

"Say rather, Earth's most earthy thought, itself
But protoplasmic in relation to
The facts. Bid these hypothesisists inform
Thee whence the germ? Evolved it out of naught, ,
Making man evolved nothingness,
Yet to evolve, perchance, into a god?
If naught thus evolves, will everything,
With a proclivity to evolve,
Evolve until infinity of space
Is crammed with evolved nothingness?
Assume that life is by successive steps,
What is the genesis of consciousness?
When enters instinct into reason's realm?
When crossed the brute, and how, the boundary line
Of immortality? From sexless how
Came unisex, and thence duality,
On which depended reproductive force?
Did Eve and Adam separately evolve,
And by an accidental jolt collide,
To find themselves adapted each to each
In complimentary sexual potency?
These questions answered or unanswered, ask
Why rocks as tombstones tell of lower forms
While mute concerning hypothetic man—
The half and almost man—the processes

Of whose evolvment called for millioned years,
As given in speculation's calendar?
Name Adam's father. Give his epitaph,
And tell the why, if genealogies
Began in Eden. Or if dumb before
These whys and hows, adjust thine ear to catch
The voice that speaks for the Infallible.
Ere earth from chaos rounded into form,
Man was a purpose of the Infinite
With all the incidents of being, whose
Completion was to be the crown of life.
And as He purposed He had power to do,
And did, and lo! man was—the purpose an
Initial entity. When? Thy memory tells
Thee not. How? Men have stretched a gossamer
Of guess across the chasms of unnumbered years,
To find Omnipotence an easy task,
And thus have thought a thousand miracles
To save them from acknowledgment of one!
Granted the power, the all of *how* was will.
He willed, and animation moved in dust.
Man was, with spiritual attributes
Impregned. Agan He willed, and from the first
A sexual variant came, endowed with power
To propagate their like. Hence why there is
No trace of ladder-steps from brute to man,
But twixt the two a chasm bottomless;
On that side instinct and residuent dust;
Reason on this and deathless consciousness.
There form and attribute diversified;
Here uniformity as fruit upon
A tree. But turn again thy thought to tread

The path we left. When came the blush of dawn,
The man perceived a change within himself,
And viewed the woman as another self.
The Adversary lingered near, and he
Surmised that some extraneous Power produced
The strange phenomenon. While gazing still
In wonderment, as if to ask himself,
What next? the sun poured out his glory-flood
Upon the earth, and drops of light dript through
Where sat the happy pair embowered. So passed
The hurrying hours till the equator of
The day was crossed, when they went wandering forth
To view the largess of the loaded trees,
And give direction, here and there, to the
Luxuriant vines that spread out in the wild
Abandonment of their vitality.
Then he beheld approaching One who had
An enigmatic dignity, at sight
Of whom the pair were moved with awe, since they
Intuitively recognized in Him
A greater than themselves. Was He their God,
Who stooped to man in this epiphany,
Or was He deputy? What measure of
Authority assumed He there? What power
Was in support of that authority?
Around the answers, as a pivot, must
Revolve His plans. Till those were known the fiend
Would be concealed, watching and listening as
An eavesdropper, as he beheld the pair
Attent to hear His words, when the august
One with authority made known His will,
Which was to be their sole and simple law,

Involving but a willingness to heed.
The affluence of provision, said He, was
Beyond the measure of their needs, since all
The largess of the groves was theirs, save one
Sole tree, refraining from whose fruit they so
Would prove regard for His, their Maker's, will,
And fix the habit of obedience in
Themselves, insuring so His guidance, with
Perpetual blessing, but in tasting which
Their disobedience would be sin, the sting
Of death, whose poison nothing could extract.
Hearing, they promised to obey, when He
Withdrew as by evanishment, and they
Were left clad only in their innocence,
Which had the purity of angel robes.
For not by flesh the spirit was defiled
Until the spirit first defiled the flesh,
By making it the instrument of sin.
The fiend in consternation heard the vow
That placed a veto on his own designs.
They were to multiply, replenish, and
Obey—*another*; One who claimed the rights
Of ownership, excluding thus himself
From all authority. Could he have been
Observed that thus he was forestalled? The yea
Or nay of it affected not the fact,
To whose effect he must supinely bow,
Or meditate on means to nullify.
That personage. Who, what was he? Or what
Of prowess did he represent whose words
Were autocratic in assertiveness,
His will the all of law? Whoe'er, whate'er,

His presence it were prudent to avoid,
And ply his arts on those who had the key
Of yea and nay with which to turn the bolt
Of destiny. These to inveigle and
Direct the turning of the key would serve
His purpose. Hence as they meandered in
Abandonment of bliss, as childhood in
Its holidays, and converse held in love's
Vernacular, he watched their every step,
Heard every word, and noted every thought.
And when the hindcast shadow of the day,
With slumbrous folds, enwrapt their weary brain,
He looked upon them as they lay in sleep's
Obliviousness unshielded. Yea, he watched
Them till the forestep of the dawn was on
The hills, and thought it in his power to wreck
The earthy tenements and send them forth
In disembodiment. But better have
Them multiply and swarm the earth, could he
And his have rule, since 'twould inaugurate
The new economy, the object of
His quest. But still that personage. Could He
Whose wrath had smitten him and his in their
Original estate be there? Such power
He feared to face in open strife. Yet had
He confidence that subtlety could thwart
Almightiness, and show its trophies in
The end. Thus much in fact, while yet he had
A pseudo bravery of thought that buoyed
Him up, and by its own attritions grew
More fiery as he thus soliloquized:
“What, should the same obnoxious One be here?

Here, too, is Lucifer, to ruin or
To rule. Ay, Lucifer the great, who in
A calm, confiding hour received the scath
Of a malignant Power; from which emerged,
He stands in all the glory of his selfhood,
And with greatness unimpaired. For what
Is greater than ability to frame
Great thoughts, transmuting them to deeds? Such
thoughts

Are deeds in embryo; for who begets
The thoughts can do the deeds. Since matter is
The tool of mind, it has no element
Of greatness. Instinct is the gloaming of
An intellect that waxes not; while man
Has an immortal element of mind
With prospect of a noon. Still he is but
A mote upon the air, and by a breath
I may direct his course. But angels have
An independency that dares resist
The tyranny of power, though wielded by
A god. So they ascend into the sphere
Of gods, and gods that upward look to thee
As greater than themselves. So great art thou,
In having mind that thinks for gods; a mind
That scorns to own a greater than itself.
What is the hugeness that employs the tool
Of matter to display the type of strength
That is the glory of the brute? The mind
Is more than matter, thought than strength. Hence
power

Of mind to act on mind is greater than
To hold a thousand universes on

A fingertip. Such, in preëminence,
Is thine. Then super-eminently great
Art thou, O Lucifer! Shall greater bow
To less, or even peer to peer, in dread
Of a dynamic fist whose shadow falls
With threatening motions on his path? Why, shame
Would put a blistering brand upon the cheek,
Should an immortal spirit of the least
Degree allow his higher self to quail
Before it with a craven homage. No
Such craven is great Lucifer. Thy past,
Thy present state—nay, independently
Of state, thy dignity of selfhood would
Prevent the thought of such servility.
Only a foe would aim to press thee down
To such degree of degradation, and
In injury find incentive still to more
Humiliate. Thus He has given the gage
Of His example as authority
For deeds to which thy nature had demurred.
Then give thyself no blame while godly as
The One who claims a godship o'er the gods.
'Tis by Himself—His thoughts and feelings—that
He measures thee; hence what He thinks would thee
Humiliate may Him no less, if aimed
Aright. Then meet thou Him as foe meets foe.
Do deeds that have His copy for thy guide,
Until humiliation proves to have
A double edge. Though not omnipotent,
Thou hast the skill to ward His blow, and power
To strike; the power of mind, whose keener edge
May cut its way into the heart of that

At which it aims. Now as thy Foe, by dint
Of force, vents hate of thee on those who own
Thy leadership, so let Him feel thy power
To wreck, if need be, what He holds so dear.
So shalt thou reach His heart and make Him prove
Thy greatness, with regret that He presumed
To take advantage of thy confidence,
And place impediments across the path
Of thy benevolence. O Lucifer!
A god whom lesser gods delight to serve,
Who, by their serving, show the power of mind
To win allegiance, from the scabbard of
This opportunity draw out thy sword,
And strike with all the prowess of resentment!

"Such fuel furnished he the fire within,
When woke the pair to greet the new-born day,
He meditated how to compass them
With fair seductions, whose attractive show
Would make the mask of evil look divine;
Toward which encompassment he reasoned thus:

" 'Experience makes one's wariness alert,
And is a source of strength in time of test.
But she, devoid of one, the other lacks;
And as the bud is weaker than the bole,
So she, of which in proof, how timidly
She clings to him, as weakness ever clings.
In her, then, is the vulnerable spot
Where I must ply the subtleties of art.
There is the wedge with which to cleave my way.'

"So reasoned he, then studied how to wear
An unsuspecting guise, concluding to
Descend below their level, so to seem.

The very pink of harmlessness; for of
Necessity approach must be upon
A lower plane of life than theirs. Wherefore
He sought the jeweled eye and gracefulness
That captivate, and after careful search
Beheld a gliding form whose divers hues
Were brilliant with the ardent beams of day;
Whose contour, movement, eye, might win the heart
Of unsuspecting innocence; to which,
With more than ventriloquial skill, he gave
A spirit potency to exercise
His attributes. Gliding conspicuously
Among the grass, with head erect, he stopt
Contiguous to the tree whose burdened boughs
Displayed their fruit in mellow lusciousness.
Then, with more ardent luster in his hues,
And posture most attractive to the eye,
He waited, in the hope of her approach.
The morning air was purity sublimed,
And redolent of rare perfumes; while all
The earth was mantled with a glory-sheen.
All nature felt a thrill of ecstasy;
For the aorta of exultant life
Had all its throbbing enginery in play.
Then were creation's king and queen embowered
Beneath a flowery canopy, each with
An arm engirt, and toying playfully
In love's own tender way. So passed three hours
On sunny wings away, when nature's wants
Prompted their going forth. Then gathered they
And ate while carelessly meandering
To and fro, as unpremeditated

In their course, and lightsome-hearted, as
The gaudy wanderer wavering on the wing:
He in restriction of exuberant growths,
And cultivation of acquaintance with
The creatures that had erst afforded him
A sole companionship; she, to explore
The flowery nooks, and note the various forms
And texture of the leaves, while listening in
Entrancement to the underneath of sounds
That seemed like voices whispering in the trees.
While thus, the arch foe watched the workings of
The mind, and noted an inquisitive
Desire to pry beneath the surface of
The seen, and scan life's mysteries hidden in
Its complex forms and qualities. There was
Her strength, which might be made her weakness, by
Perversion of legitimate desire.
Meandering still, absorbed in their pursuits,
They separated each from each a space.
The foe then used the inhibition as
A prod to curiosity to feast
Her eyes upon the fruit forbidden to
The taste, when, suddenly, she hastened toward
The place, oblivious of the distance left
Between herself and spouse, and, standing in
The dangerous vicinage, she gazed with an
Enraptured eye upon the clustered fruit,
The eloquence of whose appealing to
The palate fanned the embers of desire,
And soon Desire and Caution were at war,
Her will the only interposing power.
The foe and victim thus were face to face."

CANTO VI



CANTO VI

A solemn pathos modified his voice,
Which brought to me a sympathetic mood,
And made me shudder as I seemed to see
A world suspended by a single thread
Twixt heaven and hell; a thread one hour might break
Soon ended my suspense as he resumed:

“Since knowing not the attributes and scope
Of power in creatures lower than herself,
She felt no shock when by the serpent thus
Addressed:

“‘O crown of loveliness upon
Creation’s brow! Thy beauty makes complete
What earth had lacked; and were thy mind
As beautiful in knowledge, thou wouldst be
A god.’

“‘A god? What is it to be such?’

“‘To have thy powers of mind expand, and in
A spiritual atmosphere expatiate till,
With clearer eye, thou seest the quality
Of thoughts and deeds—the good as beautiful,
The evil as repulsive—making thus
Thy inner self the match, or more than match,
Of this without, raising thy consciousness
To reach the very sky of happiness.’
To this she answered with sweet innocence:

‘The vessel of my being now is full,
And more would be a waste of happiness.’

'Most true. It equals thy capacity.
Which godship would enlarge.'

" 'Would, then, I had
The knowledge of a god.'

" 'That knowledge is
Within thy ready reach, waiting thy will
And hand. The fruit of this celestial tree
Imparts, when eaten, the celestial power,
Infusing so its subtle qualities
That they transmute the spiritual self
Till it enjoys a higher paradise.'

" 'But He who governs here puts ban upon
The deed, while giving privilege to eat
Of all besides, saying that death will come
With eating of its fruit.'

" 'What selfish craft!
So would He keep you dwarfed, lest ye should rise
And equal Him in attributes, to share
What He enjoys, as by the eating of
This fruit ye would.'

" 'Pray, what is death? Something
That clogs the feet of life and makes the days
Drag heavily, or draws a cloud athwart
The sun of every joy?'

" 'Ay, what is death?
A nothing with a name, unreal as
The shadow of a thought, in whose profound
Unmeaningness He seeks a hiding place
For His designs. Thou hast not seen it, heard
It, felt it, and art but acquainted with
It as a name, which is the whole of it,
As unto thee. But 'tis a property

Of the insensate stuff beneath thy feet ;
And I will not presume the insolence
Of proof that aught of thee is more, so much
Is it the texture of thy consciousness.
A quenchless light is kindled in thee by
A spiritual torch, glowing with thought,
Whose effluent splendor glorifies thy life.
Even the changeful part of thee that has
A kinship to the elements of earth,
On which it is dependent for support,
Is pregnant with a spirit energy,
Which by this fruit may so be reinforced
That thou wilt more ethereal grow. The blade,
The twig, the flower, develop by an innate force ;
And so the orders of existence rise,
From insect level to the plane of gods.
Even the One who claims the right to reign
In autocratic isolation and
Enforce His will as law, was once as I,
Or even less, as certified by hoar
Tradition. But the life-force of this fruit,
Of which He ate, developed so His powers
That thus He manifests the selfishness
Of jealousy that dreads a rival, should
He not monopolize the boon. Therefore
His ingenuity He strains, to make
Death seem a monster to your innocent
Timidity. But wert thou liable
To meet this monster of the brain, whate'er
It be—extinction, submerged consciousness,
Or aught that Fantasy may shape—here is
Thy remedy.'

“ ‘In truth, the aspect of
His person is an index that bespeaks
A greatness that demands our awe. The how
He came to have it is not mine to know ;
But I may not disguise the fact, nor dare
To cross Him in a lightsome way.’

“ ‘Thy words
Do honor to thy nature, while they show
The lack and need of what this fruit can give.
Thou lookest so into the face of good
Thou seest not the ill behind its back ;
Hence thy imagination stretches far
Beyond His measure and His potency.
What thou hast looked on is the all of Him,
As what of me thou seest is the all ;
And all His power o’er thee is in His words,
Which are but measured quantities of sound,
While His authority is merely will ;
An attribute that we with Him possess.
With equal power to exercise, and right
Coequal with the power. Ask, what avails
His will? This tree is not Himself, nor is
Its nature governed by His will more than
By ours, the impotence of which needs not
The proof. Think of this bounty having no
Utility, or that utility
Obstructed by the bar of His restraint,
And void of purpose save to tantalize
Desire! That were a burlésque on the law
Of life. Grant it the virtues that He claims,
(And those I know), why should it waste the boon
It might dispense, denying knowledge that

You need to fit for life's emergencies, -
And save it from a dull monotony?
Since good the food, it must be causative
Of good as its effect, which all His words
Are powerless to prevent. Hence at His threat
Thou mayest smile, as I have done; for once
I was misinformed, unsightly, dull, until,
By lucky chance, I drew my clumsy length
This way and found the mellow droppings of
The superfluity, of which I ate,
When came elastic litheness to my joints,
While penetrating light shot to my eyes,
And every avenue of being flushed
With intellectual life until, as thou
Perceivest, I can think, speak, reason as
Thyself. From double motives I remain
Within its reach: that, eating more, I may
To more attain and, in bevolence
Of soul, its virtues advertise. Shouldst thou,
Endowed already with a noble form,
And mind of vaster native scope, partake,
Thou wouldst, as now impossible, discern
Both good and evil as a god; for thou
Wouldst be a god.'

“Be but a fraction of
Its properties and powers as thou hast said,
It is desirable. And great as is
The Being who forbids, if such the source
Of that His greatness, from the selfsame source
May I, who start midway twixt what He was
And is, obtain a kindred dignity.
And as for thee—thou art most beautiful

To see and apt to speak ; and since, as thou
Dost hold, the outer and the inner are
Related qualities, thy speech and thought
Are beautiful, and such as I would have
As an adornment of the higher sphere ;
Which thou averest is my privilege.'

" 'Thy privilege? Not privilege, but right,
Which one light motion of thy hand can seize
And give thee thy desire—desire, which is
The natural hunger of thy greater self,
Which must receive this nourishment or starve.
This makes thy eating a necessity,
To have the blossom of thy being turn
To fruit ; while abstinence were murder of
Thy greater self. Then see thy interest and
Decide thy course.'

"She hesitated, with
An eye of longing on the sun-kissed fruit,
Not thinking how eternal destinies
Were balanced on that moment's point. A pause ;
Then, with a sudden impulse of resolve,
She raised a disobedient hand and took
And ate. And so the destinating deed
Was done ; so made the wound whose hurt would
smart

Through all the years. Now she believed herself
Custodian of a talisman whose power
She would not share alone (herself a god)
In solitary exaltation, life
Hemispherically incomplete. Hence would
She have her heart's right venticle, her spouse,
Expanded as herself, its left, and so

The dual human have duality
Divine. Then hastily she searched for him,
And he the fiend was moving with concern
To find his other self, that, when they met,
The floodtide of her feelings might o'erflow
The barriers of his caution and submerge
Him by her on sweep of enthusiasm
Into the one disloyalty and doom.
For all her being seemed athrill to think
She had the sure transmuting afflatus,
Or an arousing of the latencies
That slept within. But when she held to him
The fatal fruit, his face became the dark
Reverse of hers, when back instinctively
He shrank, with more of horror than of blame—
Horror, in thinking of the deed and the
Sad consequences threatening at its heels;
Excuse in her more tender pliancy,
Whose yielding was a gentleness of heart
That could not think of aught less innocent
Than she.

“‘Forgettest thou,” said he, ‘that death
Is threatened for the deed by Him to whom
We owe our all?’

“‘But one who prompted me
Affirms that death is but a word, for
Us quite meaningless, a property
Of the unconscious stuff on which we stand.’

“‘But should that property be changed and made
Perverse, perniciously affecting what
It nourishes, and that in turn ourselves,
We then should cease to be, or be perverse;

And that were death. But be it what it may,
It is a threat, and, being that, it must
Be something ill.'

" 'Fear not. I find it good
As it is beautiful. A being fair
To look upon, and wise, assured me that,
Instead of death—be that what may—it has
A secret power to make us beautiful
Within as he without. And why not so,
Since it is beautiful? But since I ate
And live, and feel an exaltation of
Myself, eating, thou seest, brings no ill,
But guarantees fulfillment of his word.'

"In solemn cogitation mute he stood,
His mind in vacillation while his tongue
Was still. Silence he brake at length.

" 'I see
Thou livest, and thy life is mine, mine thine.
One we are; one we shall remain.

"That said,
He took and ate, and after eating asked,
"What form had he who gave his nay to Him
From whom we had a limited permit,
And whose authority we honored with
Our vow?"

"To see him was to feast the eye.
In form attenuated, and in coil
So graceful, and so beautiful in hue,
One might have thought that Beauty was his name.
His head erect was studded with such eyes
As flamed a wondrous light; and speech he had
That trickled sweetly in the ear."

“That is
The serpent as I gave him name. To learn
He has the gift of speech amazes me,
For I had thought him too beneath us for
Endowment that implies like intellect.
And as the more I think the more I feel
Amazement, while the shadow of a dark
Presentment comes o’er me, lest behind
That strange phenomenon a something as
Unusual lurks.”

“By eating of the fruit,
As he avers, his nature rose with an
Enlargement of his faculties, of which
The power of speech may be a proof.”

“Not in
Possession of a power its virtue lies,
But in its use; and speech withal still leaves
Him less than we, while we are less than He
Whose will we pledged to make our law.
Thus have we disobeyed the greater in
Obedience to the less; nor less alone
Than He, but than ourselves; and so have we
Contemned the greater and demeaned ourselves;
Which gives to us a knowledge—not of good,
Which we had known, but ill, before unknown,
And brings the wisdom that arrives too late
To serve our needs. Should He who placed us here
Recede not from His word, we are undone.
Or should He, then His word is nothing worth,
And we are victims of uncertainty.
But nothing in my nature dares a doubt
Of His inexorable purpose to

Maintain the honor of His law, which our
Contemning leaves no cover of excuse
Beneath whose kindly folds to hide. As thou
Hast spoken of an outer beauty and
An inner, as imparted that to this,
So must an inner opposite produce
An outer opposite, and leave us with
Excuseless cause for shame; and shame I feel
To have our naked forms exposed to gaze
Of all the meaner creatures, who must see
Upon the body traces of the soil
That disobedience leaves on us within.
But most I blush to think of meeting Him
Who can but see us as we see ourselves,
With even keener penetrating eye.'

'Thine eyes are mine. Our life is forfeited—
Is under ban—accursed. Hence that of us
That is the active vehicle of life
Displays the open face of our offense,
And keeps before our eye the penalty,
Making me blush to have it open to
The general gaze, in advertisement of
Our shame. But Oh! to have Him see us in
Our naked character! I fear His eye.
What can we better than conceal what we
Ourselves have shame to see, and fear to have
Exposed? Alas! I feel myself beguiled.
Since thus I trip at life's initial step,
Taking thee with me in my fall, where shall
Calamity relent and say, Enough?
Who see the end of what is thus begun?'

"At once the fountain of her eyes gave forth

The earth's first tear ; and one with greater cause
Or keener bitterness has not been since.
In vain attempt to screen their inner shame,
They hid their outer nakedness with leaves.
Thus aproned were they when the Evening laid
Her soothing hand upon the Day's hot brow,
And Nature sank into a somber mood.
So in a sweetly kindred pensiveness
Had they serenely passed the balmy hours,
But for forebodings that disquieted
The mind, keeping it chafed with anxious thoughts.
Instead, they dumbly looked each other in
The eye, with inward questionings that shunned
To show in the habilaments of speech.
Then came a sound as of a footfall that
Announced His coming whom they fain would shun,
When in a leafy covert low they cowered,
Made too obtuse by their increasing fears
To see their efforts weak futility.
Still onward came the step—the Infinite
Again in finite guise, and aspect still
August—and then a voice that seemed itself
To search them out : Adam, where art thou? Oh!
The agony of that one moment was
The stab of a remorse that sent its blade
Into the very soul. Trembling they came,
Bowing their heads in pitiful dismay,
Pleading their modesty, betraying so
The fatal knowledge that was sin's reward.
More pitiful became their plight when, one
By one, He tore the flimsy fig leaves from
Their hearts, exposing treason's nakedness.

Arraigned by Him whose eye beheld their guilt,
They both, with childlike artlessness, put forth
The facts in shameful nudity, convinced
That subterfuge would nought avail. Then came
A curse, first on the serpent's head, as type
And vehicle of him who had beguiled.
To thenceforth move no more with dignity,
But on its belly wriggle in the dust,
At once a monument and monitor.
Then was the guilty pair condemned. And still
To give the turpitude of sin a more
Enduring emphasis, all living things,
Both sentient and insentient, with the ground
Itself, were cursed; that whatsoe'er had breath,
By viciousness, and noxious weed and thorn,
By taxing man to weariness, might be
A witness to and reprobation of
Their sin; so wander where they might, and as
Their offspring would, the record should be there,
A warning eloquent though mute. Hence was
The sentence rigidly enforced—since wrong
To swerve from what was rightly given—and in
Their constitution on that fateful day
Were sown the seeds of sin and death, whose growth
Would prove a weak inconsistency of will,
Inducing character transmissible,
Accordant with hereditary law,
As flows a river from its parent springs—
The self-same river though the channel change.
Then, to insure the consequences of
The curse, while Justice took an antidote
From Mercy's hand, expulsion was decreed,

That not eternally might they remain -
In such enfeeblement and under ban,
By eating of the tree of life, but be
Susceptible of change to life upon
A higher plane. Hence Cherub guardians led
To an arena of existence where
The character would have not only test
But a development. But as they moved
With downcast eye, the shadow of the past
Was all they saw; and so they drifted forth,
Poor derelicts upon a darksome sea,
To an uncertain destiny."

But what,
I asked, had been if Adam had not sinned?

"Theo-anatomists," he said, "have racked
Their wits in efforts to dissect such ifs,
Which are but puppets of the Fancy, or
The mental toys of childish ones. Enough
To say, He *did*, and that the doing was
A foreseen fact, sure as when done, to meet
Which Mercy's hand was full of balm. So fell
The race in one, who held in potency
The whole, hence was in oneness dealt with by
The Infinite, to whom it was a whole.
Hence was it one before the bar of law,
To magnify the justness of the law
And awfulness of sin, by penalty;
While mercy, in the promised seed, should be
Displayed in equal magnitude, and prove
That the forgiving love of God was great
As the generic guilt of man. Hence is
The individual man, in nudity

Of character, before the law. And since
For individual sin condemned, he can
But justice brave or mercy plead. The fiend,
On having gained his evil end, withdrew,
In fancied secrecy, to where he still
Could see and hear the drama to its end,
Believing that the virus of his guile
Would work his will. And so he heard the curse
Pronounced upon himself, the pair and earth.
But nothing recked he for a curse that was
But as the phantom of an impotent
Resentment. Curses, said he to himself,
Are only thunder where no lightning is;
Here proving that His wrath exceeds His power,
Whose animus identifies Him as
The One who erst obstructed us; for were
His power the equal of His will, He had
Prevented this. So thinking, triumph played
In every lineament as lightning in
A cloud, and thrilled his nature till he felt
That he could brave a thousand curses rolled
On him like molten spewings from the throat
Of a volcano, could it burn him as
It burns the flesh. Yea, he could stand and shake
The fist of his defiance in its face.
Hell! He could mock the name, and slake with hate
The fiercest fury of its flames. So brave
He felt in thinking of the havoc wrought,
And that Retaliation wrenched from a
Resisting hand a due reward. Anon
He passed into a semi-reasoning mood,
To shadow forth his horoscope. 'A curse,'

Said he, 'to be inflicted by the seed
Of one who is a partner in the curse!
The weaker is to overcome the one
Before whose word the stronger fell! The joint
Offender punish the offence! But on
The serpent is to be the penalty,
As though I cared the echo of a laugh
For that. Or if by hocus-pocus on
Myself—the Curser has already spent
Himself, and proof is given that I can force
A thwack of provocation that will strike
The way I will. Then welcome such a curse!
"So now he was prepared to make report."



CANTO VII



CANTO VII

“When banished from the garden, conscious of
His ban whose law they had contemned, the pair
Looked round about them with despondent eyes,
As on another and a darker world;
Which was indeed another unto them,
Since viewed but in the shadow of the curse;
A shadow resting on and changing them
As much as their environment, which lacked
The rich redundancy of fruits, and the
Enchanting beauty of their garden home;
E’en richer, lovelier now in memory than
Before. The scant provision made demand
For greater toil, so that the luxury
Of life would taste of sweat. The future had
Become a cloudbank on the circling rim
Of life, threatening with storm the years to be.
And which was worse, the now or that to be,
Was dread uncertainty, which added fear
To their remorse. These—the reviewed, the viewed,
The feared—were lenses to their introspection.
Dazed by the sense of guilt and shame, a while
They stood apart with downward look, silent
And motionless. At length he moved into
The shadow of a tree and sat against it.
Slowly she followed to his side and leaned
Against him for a fond support, when thus
He brake the silence:

‘Woe the deed that brought

Us here! The flower of life has gone and left
A bitter fruit. I feel the bitterness
Affecting so my nature that there is
Corruption to its innermost. My blood
Hast lost its gladsome thrill. My thoughts are in
The shadow of the gone. My secret self
Is blushing to behold itself. And I
In fancy hear tomorrow's footfall with
A heavy tread approaching us. Yea, taint
There is upon my every attribute.
My very will is in a tumult, tossed
This way and that with questionings and doubts
That stir up feelings passionate, by their
Suggesting that our punishment exceeds
The measure of our deed's desert, and is
So far unjust; and since unjust—no, no!
I shudder at the presence of such thoughts.
I dare not Him impugn who spake the curse.
Such thoughts are proof of an unfitness for
A sinless place; and since unfit, it is
But meet that we should be without,
Lest we pollute it with our touch and breath,
And mar the happiness of everything
That has an eye to look on us. But all
Besides is curst, that spot presumably
Except, by our expulsion saved. I look
About me and behold no object but
Has lost some trace of loveliness, as though
Defilement rests upon the trees, the flowers,
The grass—yea, all that once was beautiful.
I hear the voices of the streams that laughed
In jocund mood, but now are murmuring with

A melancholy pensiveness; and all
The sounds of sentient and insentient things
Are souled with sadness, even to the bee
That labors with her store, and chirping ones
That irritate the ear of Night. I blush
To look upon the sinless sky and think
How all the orbs must blush to look on us.
The sun has not its former glow of joy,
The moon can have no more a tranquil smile,
While all the twinkling eyes are wet with tears
That glisten on their lids. Then what must be
His countenance whose law we have contemned,
Provoking this reversal of our state?
Had we not seen that fairer state, this might
Be lovely to the eye. But now our sin
O'ershadows everything—yea, everything.
Thus everything is a reminder of it.
But why disturb the slumbers of the gone?
Ah me! It has its dreams; and while we dream
Dreams are the sole reality, which here
May be prophetic of reality.
The future is enveloped in a cloud
Whose blackness bodes but ill, its frown as dark
As is the heart of Night, the thought of it
A darkness of the soul. Heart of my heart!
I fear, for thy sake fear—I know not what;
Something approaching with a fetid breath.
He by the breaking of whose law has come
Our scath will visit us, I fear, no more.
And still again I fear to see His face,
And have Him look on our unsightliness,
So am I tossed between this fear and that.'

"His words were punctuated with a sigh,
When she, with tenderness of voice, replied:

'We need but fear what has a fearful shape.
But such indeed has this our state, which is
No dream from which to wake relieved. Still, if
The future may engage our thoughts, let us
Recall the promise that our Seed shall bruise
The serpent's head. What that implies is not
Within the compass of my thought, but His
Alone who gave. Yet from the curse infer
That in the serpent is a foe to us
And Him who is above us all; and since
To Him, He will insure the bruise. Will He
Confound him, take away his power by means
To us unknown, or drive him from the earth?
But stay! *Our Seed* shall be the instrument.
Shall I bring forth a mightier than our foe;
One who can understand and circumvent
His craft? or one of purer nature than
Ourselves; so pure that He may enter where
We are debarred and strike the fatal spot,
Destroying so his power? Howe'er it be,
I may believe His promise who performs
His threat; and that performed, why need we fear?'

"To this her brighter thought he thus replied:
'Not only is the promise lustrous with
A hope, but shaded with a threat. The Seed
Will merely bruise, not kill, and ours in turn
Be bruised in heel. That shadows forth the fact
Of his continued power to hurt, of which,
Forewarned, we must beware. But here we are
Beset with new perplexity, having

Command to multiply, replenish and
Subdue the earth, which, by our progeny
Repeated, will innumerably increase
The Seed. Will one sole member of the whole
By nature be invested with the power,
Or every member bruise the serpent's head,
And be in turn heel-bruised, and this go on
And on in never-ending strife? Will this
One serpent multiply, so every one
Of all our progeny will be beset
By a specific foe, to have his bruise
By some beguilement, and return the bruise
With an effect that punishes? Again
We look into the dark, see nothings, mere
Imaginary things, and still surmise.
Be it as may, it is to fill the cup
Of our desert, and be a consequence
To one or all. Alas that we, who shared
Our Ruler's favor in a lavishment
Of good, should come to this our woeful plight!

'I was the first to sin,' said she. 'Be mine
The greater penitence. I would, indeed,
That tears might wash away my guilt; then from
My eyes should flow the rivers of my grief.
But tears possess no cleansing quality.
My tears would be of flesh. My sin is of
The soul. But my worst pang is this: that not
Myself alone, but thou, too, art involved
In these disastrous consequences through
My listening to the guile of that false tongue.'

'Nay, take not thou the greater blame who in
The trustfulness of innocence wert so

Beguiled ; for I, since unbeguiled and first
In knowledge, have the greater guilt. Nor let
Us feel too heavily the burden of
Our ban while love is left, for love will give
A sweet to bitterness. The pressure of
Our woe will unify our sense of need,
And bind us in one bond of sympathy—
Under one burden, one in heart to bear.
So may some fragmentary joy be drawn
From out the ruins of our state.'

'There is

Already,' she replied, 'a foretaste of
The joy in this thy passing over my
So great offense ; for now I feel thy heart
Beat warmer, and it warms my own ; and while
We cling together we may bear our ills,
Made lighter by two shoulders under them.
Moreover, we may dare the hope that He
Whose goodness was so lavish ere we sinned,
And who has made such promise in our Seed,
Will show His nature in vouchsafing us
Some lesser good. In lesser things we see
Relenting signs. Although the earth is cursed,
To every tiny flower night brings a drop
Of dew to soothe the scorch of day, and morn
A smile of sunshine to its heart. Then sure
His goodness is not lacking one small drop
And kindly smile for us, though undeserved.
Hence with the drop and smile from Him ,and love
In us, enough is left to give us joy
That will in measure antidote the curse.'

"Then with a sigh that had a tinge of smile

He said:

‘Thy thought awakens thought. Our doom
Is death, which we have found. Then death is not
A ceasing to exist, but change; and that
We have—alas, how great! And life is what
Is lost. Thus we are dead from what we were,
In what we are; a death in life. Now all
That breathe and have an eye to see will look
On us as on these withered leaves, which may
Be withered by the curse we brought. Yet we
Have found our worst, which may be borne with more
Of joy, perhaps, than we conceive; in which
Emollient thought I see sustained thy view
Of mitigation of our punishment
From what at first we feared. But let us hence
To gain acquaintance with our new abode.’

“Then forth they went with timid step, and eye
Prepared to peer into the dark unknown.”

As he rehearsed the rueful tale I could,
If in the flesh, have wept until the ducts
Of pity drained my body dry. Then I
Presumed to ask, Was not their finity
An imperfection, imperfection an
Infirmity, and hence responsible
For what they did, exonerating them
From blame? And why had weakness not a shield
Against an adversary stronger than
Themselves, and so averted all the scath
Of sin? to which he thus replied:

“In this

Thy Judgment has a sentimental swoon,
And needs to gain a normal poise. Naught made

Is blameworthy for being made, nor yet
For what it is as from the Maker's hand.
Nor size nor plane of being constitutes
Perfection. What completely serves its end
Of being has perfection's touch; from moth
To man, from man to angel, angel to
The highest of created things. Hence man
Was perfect until his abuse of power
Lessened his range of possibilities.
Disparity in strength is naught. One strong
As all the hosts of hell could only strike
The keys of sense, or make suggestions to
Ensnare the will. Concede a weakness in
The tempted. All with destinating will
Are strong enough to stand. Their weakness was
No weaker than is in their progeny,
Nor stronger then the foe than since. Admit
The value of the six milleniums of
Experience. 'Tis divided twixt the fiend
And man. But thou assumest that his power
Was irresistible. Call up those years
From out the silence of the past, and let
Them testify as oracles of fact,
They will unite to contradict thy thought;
For starry souls, in every age, have shone
Beyond the clouds when direful tempests raged,
Bidding defiance to the selfsame foe;
And this while trammled with heredity
And the defilements of environment,
From which the Eden life was free; and none
Now falls but where some other one has stood.

Obedience is the test of loyalty;
Hence Him they must obey to whom they were
A cog in the great wheel of His designs.
Nor less a test could loyalty have asked
Or wisdom given. He could but lead them as
They chose to follow, and upraise them with
The lever of the years as they had will
Responding to His will. Hence was His law
The alphabetic test of loyalty.
No more impartial jury could be found
Than they; none with the facts more conversant,
Who, having once transgressed, were conscious of
Their fault—by shame and fear of punishment
Confessed—and so condemned themselves, giving
Thereby approval of the law they broke.
Had they endured the test, they so had gained
In strength. So have the generations made
Advancement. Hence temptation was and is
Allowed, and had been vain as beckoning to
Attract a star had not the shadow of
Themselves obscured the face of God."

Since God

Foresaw their act, with all its onreach of
Effects, He must have willed whate'er has been.
Where, then, the sin in doing what He willed?

"In crowning man with the elective power,
He willed the possibility of sin.
But not in the possession, but the use,
Of power resides responsibility. God gave,
Man uses it; hence man, not God, becomes
Responsible for good or ill. Power is
A reservoir of possibilities,

Responsibility a stimulus,
And from the use of power comes power, in fiends
For ill, angels and men for good. Thus on
The action of his will man's all depends,
And in himself there is a judgment seat.
So is it in the higher court. Men's deeds
Are measured like themselves—not by their form,
But by the animating soul within.

CANTO VIII



CANTO V. II

So much already learned, my feeling was
As having tasted the forbidden fruit,
When my attendant thus again discoursed :

“When sown the seed, the arch fiend left, sure that
Its germination would be followed both
By blossom and the fruit. So back he went
To seek their plaudits who awaited his
Return. But ere returning every part
Of earth was clearly mapped on memory's page.
He learned withal how works the human mind—
Its limitations and its scope—enough
To be a cue in future efforts to
Beguile the race. So was an impulse given
To resolution, and a light to hope.
Meanwhile the hosts awaiting his return
Felt prisoned in a dreary solitude
And worn by the continuous chafe of their
Suspense into impatience at their Chief's delay.
Naught then had been unwelcome that should give
Their energies a shock. Let it involve
An agony of strife resulting in
More infernality of nature, it
Would be preferred to stagnancy. Therefore
They sought activity in thinking of
Him with a freedom in their thoughts that seemed
A sequel to the past disloyalty,
Which fitted them to exercise it now
To his disparagement who gave the cue ;

For being fallen in their nature as
Their sphere, they little harmonized except
In sin's dread partnership and its results.
Even each other's presence they endured
In an unamiable mood, since all
Inclined to blame their fellows for their state,
As though by an extraneous influence came
What they by choice had fashioned for themselves,
And most their Chief, who by his counsel first,
And then desertion, locked the door of fate.
Their leaders recognized this adverse mood,
With which their own had sympathy, and bade
The hosts assemble to deliberate on means
Emollient to this painful exigence.

Then Belial from the mountain summit spake:

‘Immortal dignities! we wonder not
That you have doubts and questionings: whether
There be a greater than our Chief who has
Ill motives that despise our dignity,
Delighting in the rigors of our state;
Whether the countless orbs have rulers whose
Ambitions have conspired against us to
Expulsion from our sphere, and whether we
Have certain prospect of our Chief's return.
Conditions are prolific breeders of
Such questionings, but barren answerers.
Hence we must lend an ear to catch the voice
Of Reason's oracle, which answers thus:
Some power, since doing in defiance of
His will, is greater than our Chief, who deemed
Himself the deputy of One supreme,
Invisible to all beneath Himself,

Therefore unknown by direct evidence.
There are who claim to be His deputies,
Who may, in rival jealousy, conspire
To thwart our Chief's expanding purposes,
Hurling disaster in eruptive wrath,
So to maintain their own ascendancy;
To whom he gave a personality
In which imagination found a Head.
But here we stand upon a quicksand of
Surmise, assuming ignorance in him,
In which belike we but betray our own.
Why he delays return we nothing know,
Save that he entered on a great emprise
That should redound to our advantage, his
Success contingent as a cloud upon
The winds of circumstance, which may have blown
Adversely to his quest. But in his past
We may decipher an assurance of
Return, for never has he failed us in
Our need. Ay, I consider his delay
A proof of his persistency, which will
Not come without a fruitage of his quest;
For which in patience we must calmly wait.'
He ceased, when all was silent as the flight
Of time. Then Moloch forward stept, and thus,
In tones of gravity, he spake:

'This is

A time that tests the genuineness of faith,
The strength of patience and the heart of Courage.
To have an open eye when all is light;
To bear the languor of indulgent ease;
To brave the danger of a zephyr's wing,

Is what effeminates and cowards may.
But to see light beyond the thundercloud;
To bear the famine with a cheerful hope;
To overcome the monsters of the mind;—
This tries the mettle of a god. So are
We tried, which gives us opportunity
To prove ourselves. Attenuated by
Our inactivity, the time seems long,
Though but a step in the eternal march,
And but a short step with his task compared.
Go with him on imagination's wing
Through hitherto untraversed sweeps of space,
To worlds unnumbered as these grains of dust.
Behold him pause with scrutinizing eye,
To look into the deep arcanum of
Conditions, non-content till he shall find
Enough to fill the measure of our hope.
Then will your patience hear the lullaby
Of Peace, and be embosomed in a sweet
Repose. While thus you wait the field of new
Activity, you may be active in
Devising methods of hostility,
To serve us should the Power opposing erst
Pursue and be obstructive there.'

“ ‘Amen!’

Said Bacchus, with a smack of emphasis
That few could imitate, adding: ‘The air
Is laden with hostility, which we
Inhale and must exhale. Then take deep breaths,
Exhaling it with poisonous qualities
That purify our nature and prepare
Us for the new activities. This we

Can do without the moping of delay,
Or, otherwise, what could we elsewhere,
If all our powers be enervated here?
Hate! hate, if nothing more. Impersonate
The Unseen. With Imagination's eye
Behold Him armed and confident in an
O'erestimate of strength.' Then strike with all
The might of thought and feeling, as it were
To kill. So will our weapons tension for
The coming strife. The coming? Nay, 'tis here;
The thought of which might melt a glacier's heart
With a poetic fire, as mine is now.
Then hark! and touch your torches to the flame.

Upon a mountain top I stood
And saw this orb in widowhood,
Beside the coffin of the dead,
With mourner's ashes on its head,
And I was sad.

But soon I had a mighty thrill,
To feel the freedom of my will;
A freedom from the fetters riven;
A freedom to my godhead given,
And I was glad.

I looked beyond the bounds of years
To the horizon of the spheres,
And from that energizing hour
I felt an increment of power
To what I had.

If all will strive to emulate
The force of my aggressive hate,

That hate's impulsion will prevail,
And in impenetrable mail
We shall be clad.'

"Then Mammon took an attitude to speak,
But paused, as from the cloudy envelope
He saw ethereal sheen emerge, as it
Were moonlight oozing from a melting cloud,
Waxing into a glow effulgent as
The face of Noon; when burst a thundrous shout
As though a hemisphere of clouds had belched
In unison; for lo! their Chief was on the mount.
Then all were speedily in motion to
Assume an orderly array; the Chief
Upon the highest peak, conspicuous as
A lofty campanile; Moloch upon
His right with Mammon by his side, their hosts
From midfront circling to the rear; Belial
And Bacchus to the left, their followers in
The intervening space. From summit to
The base they thronged, and thence around upon
The plain, all in a press of eagerness,
Their thought and feeling suddenly reversed.
All eyes were now upon their Chief, who felt
Triumphant pride o'er his success, which lent
Heroic glamor to his countenance,
Whose every feature beamed encouragement,
As gleaming outwardly what glowed within.
All now assembled and attent, silent
As football of the languid snow, he thus
Addressed them:

 'Mighty potentates and powers!
Ay, gods, as ye shall prove yourselves. *Shall* did

I say? I qualify and say, *Have* proved;
Proved by your patience and your constancy,
Which in due time shall have their due reward;
For I have come, as Fortune's herald, to
Proclaim good tidings, though complexioned not
As I had hoped, since not irenic but
Heroic exercise will henceforth give
Your powers employ. In prosecution of
My quest, success involved persistent toil,
Expendng which I gave no niggard dole,
But glimpsed conditions in unnumbered worlds,
Where none held out a hospitable hand
Until I spied one known as Earth; small as
Compared with this, and newly finished in
Its garniture, evincing dearness to
Its Ruler's heart, as 'twere a fondling on
His breast, a precious jewel to His eye.
Its revolutions bring alternate light
And shadow known as day and night. It has
Abounding life, encrowning which is one
With attributes the miniature of ours,
Having enswathement in insensate stuff,
Elaborated from such elements
As constitute the orb. When Night had thrown
Her dusky veil athwart the scene, that form
Became quiescent in unconsciousness,
And lo! a most unique phenomenon.
A procreative complement evolved
From him, and one was twain. Then, when the day
Returned, he was renascent and in sweet
Delight, as though he felt a supplement
To life. And through the early hours they gazed

In admiration on each other till
Their admiration mellowed into love.
So sped the amorous hours on sunny wings,
When evening brought a pensive aftermood,
And I prepared to captivate their thoughts.
But ere I crossed the threshold of design,
I saw the form of One approaching who
Assumed a condescending guise, while yet
His person had the dignity of stern
Authority; concerning whom I could
But have surmise upon surmise, all which
Evaporated in uncertainty.
Then curiosity grew pregnant with
Suspicion that His presence boded ill.
Why came He at a juncture so supreme?
Could He be representative of Him
Who wrought our ill, whose enmity would not
Abate, but, inkling my designs, would be
Obstructive still? Or had some lesser Power
Prepared this lesser orb, to ornament
His diadem of skill? Were He the one
Or other, He who kinged the orb was great
Enough to give me prudent pause. At His
Approach the wondering pair demeaned themselves
With deferent awe, while hearing Him forbid
The eating of a certain fruit on pain
Of death; to which His threat I gave the lie,
And led the secondary self to fling
The threat into His face and take the first
In partnership of deed. So was I more
A god to them than He. He came again
And read confession in each countenance,

At which He showed a keen chagrin, and poured
Hot curses from the caldron of His wrath
Upon my proxy (for a creature was
A mouthpiece at my prompt) and then upon
The pair and the unconscious earth, sweeping
The whole into a gulf of feebleness,
Where we may finish what I have begun.
His curse was aimed obliquely at myself,
As though He feared to meet me openly.
Then my suspicion of the One who breathed
The curse was ratified; because of its
Distinctive quality of spirit and
Vehemence in expression, which was keen
Enough to thrust its point through adamant,
As it was aimed to pierce me through and through.
But who He is boots less than what, and of
The what He leaves us not the vestige of
A doubt. Grant power that gave the orb its form;
Own its topography the signet of His will;
Be lesser creatures puppets for His eye;—
The crown of all is wrested from His hand,
And we have that for which the orb exists.
What then avail His barbs of ill-intent?
What is His wrath but frenzied impotence?
Or what His curse but counterfeited power?
Curses are wind that blows itself to death.
But e'en His curse attenuates itself
To nothingness—dies like an echo in
Some future Seed, who is to have more power
Than its original. Here then we have
The line of conflict drawn, and so are made
The foes of One our Foe, to meet whom, and

To rule or wreck His work and leave it a
Perpetual monument of prowess—nought
More tempting could incite to zeal, and nought
Give greater bliss than such activity,
To grind to powdery ruin what is wrecked;
For which prepare ye to cooperate
Without a qualmish hesitancy that
Would critically scrutinize the deeds
That are the children of Necessity.
Conditions have a dictatorial voice
That we must heed, nor look the means in face.
Necessity gives virtue to the means.
We have been wronged by an imperious Power
That thwarted efforts at benevolence;
To which, in inactivity, we must
Submit, and so endure as cravens a
Superlative of torture damnable,
Or by resentment of injustice gain
Immunity and the resumption of
A worthy sphere. Then after all that we
Have borne of this gross insolence, say ye
Whether ye wish eternity to snap
On you the gyves of this your state, when by
One effort we can gain advantage that
The hand of Circumstance is offering us,
To make ourselves the masters of our fate.
That crown of earth has corporeity
Of earthy stuff, which to the spirit is
At once encumbrance and necessity—
Encumbrance, that it clogs activity;
Necessity, since only through it has
He cognizance of that without. But we,

Despite, can operate within on the
Essential self, and bring it downward by
Successive steps until the Maker and
The made are in eternal feud, and so,
At least, relieve the tedium of our state.
But who can say what murk may cloud His mind,
When disappointment blocks His every turn?
Mayhap, in sheer disgust, we shall be left
In undisputed rule. Then say for what
You are prepared.'

“As there he paused, their eyes
Had fiery glitter, kindled by resolve
To have their deeds amen the uttered words.
No such enthusiasm had they felt before
Nor shown such eagerness for high enprise;
Nor equal homage to their Chieftain paid.
And none of all the hosts but felt the fire
Of his antagonism glow with fiercer flame.
Evil then struck its poison deeper in
Their nature, till they nothing loved, and set
Themselves the task of cultivating hate;
As though in hate would be a base for hope.
Nor beauty they beheld in aught save as
Their contrast, mirroring their hideousness;
So making it an object of their hate.
And their conception of the Infinite
Made Him a measureless antagonism, to
Be hated with a hatred measureless.
Even their Chief they served less out of love
Than as the instrument through which they hoped
Their hate might reach its mark with most effect.
Nor he of love or beauty felt or saw

In aught so lovable, or so to be
Admired, as once they were, since from the hand
Of Him he hated; hated for the power
That proved his impotence. His nature, in
Exceeding theirs, made him more greatly feel
The ignominy of their fallen state,
As man has feelings to the brute unknown.
Hence was his hell by so much more a hell,
Making him more infuriate in will;
And more he showed it as he longer spake,
Until his frame shook with the agony
Of hate that made his visage dreadful to
Behold: dreadful enough to make the blood
Of one in flesh coagulate. When paused,
He stood in silence that was felt as 'twere
A palpitation of the atmosphere,
That all his words might percolate into
Their minds. Belial then brake the silence thus:
 'Belial consent to such inaction? No!
His very shadow would resent it. Ay,
The dust that feels the pressure of his feet
Would squirm to life, and with a thousand stings
Strike at a thought so damnable. O ye
Insulted yet puissant powers! As none
Of us made choice of this our state, and none
Endures but in resistant mood, so none
Of us will hesitate to launch ourselves
Upon the glorious ocean of his plans
Who gives our zeal so good a stimulus,
In that he makes a chance to prove and help
Ourselves—perhaps recover more than we
Have lost, or, failing that, at least rebuke

Injustice, while we show our innate love
Of right, and gain withal a respite from
This stagnancy of being. This to do,
We must antagonize who dares to act
As our antagonist, making His heaven
A hell, and so our hell a heaven. Our hell?
We have no hell but that within ourselves,
Which our despondency has made, thinking
That all before was blank vacuity;
Whereas our Leader fills the future with
Great worlds of promise, where our grand exploits
Will make our every breast a heaven; and as
We make our heaven our Foe will find His hell.
This to accomplish we must heed the word
To crush whatever comes beneath our feet,
So Him we thwart who dared to place it there.
In this estate no obligation binds
Us to obey a will that wills our ill.
Our only law is individual will.
Hence I approve our leader's purpose, brimmed
As it is with bravery, and eagerly
Await the time to give the protest of
My deeds against the Power that would obstruct.'

"By their applause approval was expressed,
When Mammon felt a sympathetic thrill,
And thus his thoughts found vent:

'Great potentates!

Our duty looks us in the eye and calls
Our courage to assert itself. There is
An Unseen whom we know but by His deeds,
The offspring of His mind; deeds that betray
His character. In these we see the gloat

Of a despotic power to find itself
Supreme in that one attribute which lacks
In all ennobling qualities, and hates
The good it lacks. As victims of such deeds
And hate, we must reciprocate with deeds
And hate. Aught less were tacitly to own
Ourselves in fault, and a supine consent
To eternize our present state; the thought
Of which would rouse the lowest lifeform to
Assert itself in mutiny. I am
Prepared for the resistant strife, and in
Our Chief's report see possibilities
That make my bosom swell with mighty hopes.
A being he describes, of substance gross,
Enswathing an immortal element,
Each upon each dependent. Should we make
The gross predominant, the spirit will
Become debased, and marred the ideal of
The Maker's mind. And this we may when comes
The test of mind with mind, of skill with skill;
Despite the freak of might that vented on
Our outward state and could no more. That Power
Shall find us henceforth on our guard. The task
That is to tax our ingenuity
Will furnish exercise akin to bliss.
The thought of it already mitigates
The cheerlessness of our condition. But
To feel retaliation's power to smite;
To toy with fickleness and make it serve
Our ends; to captivate with poisonous
Delight the unsuspecting prey, mocking
The futile efforts of the Foe,—surely

That will give our lot a smack of heaven.
For that I pledge eternity of effort.'

"So said, he stampt his foot, as if to split
The rock beneath him, when a shout went up
That rent the air, when Moloch waved his hand,
And in the hush that followed thus discoursed:

" 'Puissant Chief and potentates and powers!
The Foe has made us foes without our choice,
And we in honor must as honor bids;
Which is, with concentrated force to strike
In answer to the stroke we have received.
How this to do with most effect demands
Immediate and profoundest thought. Therefore
I look into the heart of facts, and see
Antagonisms as a clash of wills;
Of which the One who trusts material force
Must have a character whose grossness is
The counterpart of what He trusts, while, of
Necessity, He gives a grossness to
Their natures whom He dominates, and is
Destructive of the elements that yield
The spirit strength, as witnessed in their weak
Facility already manifest.
To free them from their low environment
And re-environ them in sensitive
Accord with our designs, will be to them
The acme of benevolence, to Him
A demonstration of our power. This may
Be done, since they already have been proved
Approachable; susceptible withal
To influences that debase them in
Their Ruler's eye to very odiousness.

We learn that through their lower self alone
The not-self is perceived. Then ours will be
To obfuscate the mind until the race
Beholds a symbol of the Unseen in
The seen, and so at length the seen becomes
The all; for which we must experiment
Until experience ripens to success,
When our success will be the Foe's dismay.'

"Then Bacchus showed a readiness to speak,
When all became attent as thus he clothed
His thoughts:

" 'Ye great invincibles!
Invincibles? Ay, such we soon shall prove.
I note a contrast twixt that orb and this.
There is abounding life, while here is none—
Not even Death, for here is nought for him
To feed on, but his ashes are beneath
Our feet. To look from this to that might well
Incite this mount to set its rocky feet
Atrip in dancing jubilation, as me
It thus inspires:

In Fortune's hand behold
A world of more than gold,
Which asks that will
And toil and skill
No effort to obtain it grudge.

That world doth magnetize
My heart as well as eyes.
Hence I awake
The prize to take
As Fancy gives a knowing nudge.

Before the bench of Fate
We all shall stand in state,
Expounding laws
That serve our cause,
Our Chief as our impartial Judge.

I scorn the unseen Powers,
And claim that world as ours,
When I and mine
With all combine
Against the Foe without a budge.'

"Now spake, and thus, the Chief
A parting word: 'My hopes that ebb'd adown
The channel of the past are in the flood,
Bearing an argosy of prospects; for
Your countenances are to me as one
Exponent of desire and hope, combined
With an unfailing loyalty, and pledge
Withal of such achievements as encrown
The brave; by which encouraged, I return
To earth, there to enforce my task anew.
Maturest thought assures me that the Power
Opposing there is what opposed us erst;
In spite of which I go full-armed with the
Audacity of courage to contend
For government of that fair orb, to be
A field on which to exercise our powers,
And fit us so for further enterprise.
I go to bear the onerous brunt of a
Tremendous fury that would terrorize
Me with the booming of a curse; to make
Your weal the burden of my mind, the wrongs

You bear the burden of my heart, and on
My next return to advertise you of
Affairs in which your interests are involved.
Should absence tempt to weariness, be sure
That absence there will more advantage you
Than presence here, since this inaction is
Your irk while there is promised boon, and in
My absence you will have assurance that
My hand is on the lever of your hopes.
And in your most depressing hours, forget
Not that the time is there as long as here,
The Foe as strong, His wrath as fierce, and I
Alone will represent you all, to bear
The all of what would be the burden of
You all. I know not how will multiply
The race, how operate the curse pronounced.
Still multiply it will as He decreed
Who gave a law prophetic of that end,
And operate the curse without surcease;
For nought abates His wrath who spake the word,
As our injustice borne doth certify.
In that we have the axis of a hope,
Since, by the keeping of His wrath aflame,
We may provoke Him to intensify
The action of the curse, even to the
Extinction of the race, and leave us sole
Possessors of the orb, which thenceforth will
Be made our rendezvous, and swung the gate
Of an eternal hope. And as our hope
Develops, His, whose germ is in a Seed
To come, will rot. That threatened Seed, which was
To bruise your Chief, confirms our partnership;

Hence every one must take it as against
Himself, and all be as they were but one.
Then watch for my return. Till then, adieu.’
“That said, he slowly disappeared in space,
As dies a breath upon the frosty air.”



CANTO IX



CANTO IX

During an interval, my mind was in
A rolling surge of thought, when he resumed.

“The clock of time had ticked away the years;
And now the primal pair, obedient to
The law as spoken by their Maker in
The ear, and written by His finger in
The flesh, had multiplied, replenishing
The earth, which half reluctantly returned
Its dole. Life was an April day of sun
And cloud, the contrast twixt their earlier state
And this, an ever-present monitor
That spake in Memory’s ear; in heeding which
They did the Will Supreme. And having from
The cup of stern experience drank the gall,
The draught had made them wary of the foe,
Hence strong where innocence had proved itself
So weak. To further fortify themselves
In fealty, and warn their progeny
Withal against the foe, a sacrifice
Commemorated, year by year, the blight
Of Eden’s deed, acknowledging the taint,
The guilt, the ill desert, yet trust, of all,
Which every one regarded as his own.
So through the outer eye would they impress
The inner self, while adding cautions that
Would serve as guideboards pointing out the road
Of rectitude. And simultaneously,
The Infinite was visioning within

The sweet attractiveness of righteousness,
To have the will of all accordant with
His will; in all of which the Adversary saw
A special urgency and stimulus,
And hence prepared his arts to meet the whims
Of mood and circumstance. But not as erst,
By ocular device and vocal word,
Which would arouse resistant wariness,
But by suggestions in the chamber where
The soul holds private council with itself,
And virile thought begets the strong desire
That makes itself the master of the Will.
As moved the years, the moral poison of
The sire betrayed transmission to the son
Whose right would be to monument the home,
Plus the maternal ante-natal moods
Of days when doubts and dim uncertainties
Hung o'er the spirit like a lowering cloud,
Which gave the flesh hereditary taint,
And the arch foe encouragement."

Then was

He not a creature of necessity,
A vane that could but point as blew the wind?
"All wills inherit tendencies; yet none
Are bondmen to necessity, else were
Necessity a substitute for will;
Deeds void of moral quality; no wrong,
No right, hence no accountability.
This human nature and its laws deny.
Conscience refutes it. Every blush of shame
For deeds, or fear of consequence, is a
Mute negative. Nor were thy question asked,

Its contradiction being in the thought.
In him was but the nature of the race,
Endowed with destinating potencies,
Which hung not on the slender thread of his
Heredity, but on the culture of
Its traits, by which himself was maker of
Himself, the molder of his destiny,
The ultimate of self. Though he could be
None other, he could reach the summit of
Himself and find the atmosphere of heaven.
His knowledge of the ought was manifest
When came the time for yearly sacrifice,
With deeper consciousness of selfhood and
Implied responsibilities to both
The brothers, who would seek in solitude
The hallowed silence that was Nature's awe
In presence of the Infinite. There they
Would offer each his individual gift—
The hiërogllyph of both his thought and heart—
To win the favor of the Great Unseen.
The Day was reaching forth a foot to step
Upon the threshold of the East, and Night
Was putting on her sandals to depart,
When still the elder lay in slumber's light
Embrace, and airy fancies came and went
In whimsical promiscuousness; and most
Conspicuous in the scene, the fiend appeared,
Bodied in splendor of auroral light,
And thus addressed him in impressive tones:
 'O worthy son of worthy parentage!
Thy thoughts, I see, are Godward turned, which proves
The goodness of thy heart; a goodness He

Will recompense. For verily it is
A complimentary homage that so true
A representative of virtue pays,
Which, were it paid to me, I would receive
With smiles of benediction on thy head.
So must He feel, and so wilt thou be blest.
Might I suggest an offering worthy of
Thyself and Him, the product of thy toil
Should be the symbol of thy heart; for it
Would be the essence of thyself, and so
Thyself were on the altar laid; which act
Would earn thee merit and reward. Aught more
I need not say to one so versed as thou
In duty's code. Farewell. I shall attend
When He bestows His benison, and feast
Myself, my eyes and ears, on thy delight.'

'How reassuring,' said he when awake,
'To have this very transcript of my thought.
Why should I look upon parental faults
As mine, and simulate repentance for
A deed not mine? Or why make every flaw
Of mine a nagging ghost, and think that He
Who made me man requires the service of
A God? But where is flaw with flawless will?
And that He knows, if aught He knows, I have,
As will be indicated by the gift
That represents myself.'

"Thus was he more
Benumbed in spiritual sense, as by
The Tempter's unctions words confirmed in that
To which his nature had before inclined;
A nature dead to good as was the ground

He tilled. Hence he prepared what savored of
His sordidness, and trust in merited
Reward instead of Mercy's boon, thinking
To buy the favor of the Infinite
With coin from out the mint of Providence.
When came the sad memorial day, the two
Retired into a solitude, where they
And God alone would be; the elder with
His offering of an estimated worth
That vanity appraised; the younger with
A symbolized trust in the redemptive power
Of the head-bruising One. There they had each
Prepared an altar of the unhewn stone
At hand, and now their offerings laid thereon—
His victim this and that his bloodless gift—
Applied the fire, then waited for the bright
Approving sign. Anon the glory-cloud
Enveloped the uncircling smoke of that
Which symbolized the tragedy of death
And life—Justice and Mercy leagued—and shone
Effulgent as the nucleus of a sun,
To signify Jehovah's smile; while that
Which had an odor of the mart went up
In unilluminated blackness, sending back
A shadow that his eye beheld as 'twere
Jehovah's frown, on which a while he gazed,
With growing sullenness, then stepped aside,
And in abstracted thought, with downcast look,
Mechanically sauntered to and fro
Till startled by a voice from out a cloud,
As falls an echo on the ear, and thus:

“‘If well thou doest, it is well with thee;

If ill, sin coucheth at thy door to make
Thy soul its prey; for evil mood begets
The evil deed. Then master it e'er it
Doth master thee and lead thee on to do
The evil deed.'

"The warning was a spark
To a combusive wrath that had no ears
To hear when Wisdom spake. So there he stood
In statue-silence, threatening as a sky
Where winter breeds his storms, imagining
A grievance, when the Tempter prompted thoughts
That came distinctly to his consciousness
As could a fellow's voice. Yea, Fancy saw
The very form that visited his sleep,
As thus:

" 'O worthy one! I am amazed—
Amazed at what nor earth nor heaven has seen
The like. Words choke me in their crowd to leave
My lips in sympathetic indignation.
I came in due fulfillment of my word,
To gratulate thee on the blessing sure
To drop in dewey sweetness on thy head.
But Oh! Great Justice! whither art thou fled
That such indignity is possible?
Had I presented such an offering as
A voluntary homage, and been so
Requited in return, I should have wished
Ten thousand worlds within my grasp, that I
Might hurl them at the ingrate wickedness.
What thou hast done was worthy of thy heart;
But the return was worthy of a fiend,
And leaves a curse upon the day 'tis done.
What is thy brother to be darling of

This partiality, which must suggest
Ambitious thoughts to him, and wariness
For self-defense in thee. Thou art above
Him by the right of birth. Does this rebuff
Portend a purpose to supplant thee? Thou
Art more than equal in the stalwartness
That glorifies the manhood of a man.
Then why should his effeminacy be
Esteemed to thy disparagement? Yet where
Is thy redress? Nay, thy defense against—
We know not what, except as inkled in
This gross indignity? Thou canst not reach
The greater One unseen. But one there is
Within thy reach, in striking whom thou wilt
Defend thyself. Then do what thy defense
Demands, without a scruple, knowing this:
That what demands the deed is guiltier than
The deed.'

“At the suggestion mooted thus
He felt an impulse to avenge himself.
Nor needed he delay to frame excuse
For venting of his wrath. Still, ere the thought
Became his deed, he had the touch of a
Restraining power, and a revealing flash
That made him pause. But the intensity
Of wrath, in their despite, impelled to haste,
Lest Conscience, standing in his path, might yet
Prevent him with forbidding sword, as he
Of Pethor in a later age was met.
The brother then approached with soothing words,
Which brought a momentary lull, to be
A tightening of the bowstring of his wrath,

Whose arrow would with more vehemence fly,
As thus it did:

“ ‘What hast thou done to thus
Supplant me in His favor whom I sought
To please by offering what, by toil, is made
A portion of myself, which thine is not,
Hence has unequal worth. Knowest thou not
My place as heading thee; or, knowing, does
The prod of thy ambition thus incite
Thee to a thrusting of thyself between
Me and my heirship rights?’

Abcl. ‘Nay, bid such thoughts
Begone; for they are an injustice both
To thee and me. Thy right I own, and pay
The reverence that the right demands, holding
Thee in esteem as thou art near of kin.
I hither came to share a blessing, not
Monopolize, and have no power on the
Dispensing hand to open or to shut.
Thy blessing is delayed; but much I hope
Its feet are at thy door.’

Cain. ‘Thy speech is fair,
But I distrust the deeds designed to give
Persuasive lubrication to thy arts,
Insinuating into His esteem
To my disparagement and detriment.’

A. ‘Nought have I done but what thyself may'st do;
Nought gained but what is in thy power to gain.’

C. ‘Ay, with thy nature; but I like it not.’

A. ‘Thy like or dislike is no fault of mine;
Nor fault is mine that He accepted what
I offered and rejected thine.’

C. 'For that I like Him not, and like not what He likes.'

A. 'O brother! shudder at the wickedness
Of such a word.'

C. 'I'm in no shuddering mood;
Nor will I brook the insolence that smites
In thy rebuke.'

“His movements were as if
To leave, when, seeing an unguardedness,
He followed up his words with blows, until
Extinguishing the spark of life in him
Whose blood craved pity with no common voice.
No sooner done than there he stood, aghast
And trembling at the horror of his deed,
He now a blood-stained fratricide. So still
And silent all around, it was as though
Creation held her breath, as well she might
When her best hope was gone. Then thought he of
The trees as witnesses that seemed to shed
Upon the air a whisper of his guilt.
The altar stones had voices for his ear
That said antiphonally, Sin to sin!
Yea, sin to sin! The very ground beneath
His feet groaned imprecations, and the light
Of heaven pierced through the bosom of his guilt,
Showing the inward blackness of his heart,
Until he shuddered to behold himself.
Fain had he bid the vanished one return.
Too late. In guilty cowardice he stole
Away as if to lose himself in some
More distant solitude, when, from the void
Above, the former voice spake audibly

With question that implied his guilt, and met
His brusque evasion with accusing words
That shot their lightning through his soul; and at
Their heels rolled thunder curses till he felt
As 'twere a world's weight crushing him to make
Confession of an agony of fear
To meet a human face. Assurance then
Was given that Mercy still would hold a shield
Against assault. With that assurance as
His passport in the world, he felt secure.
Yet dared he not to meet a father's eye
And mothers' heart, whose grief might scorch his own.
It had indeed intensified his grief
And brought remorseful agony, could he
Have seen the horror staring in their eyes,
And heard the wailing anguish of their hearts,
Upon discovery of the daring deed.
'This,' said the father, gazing on the corpse,
'This is death—death—the deeper vengeance of
The curse, contaminating so the blood
That ill comes with and overcomes the good.
The pride of our possession proves our loss.
Better not have than have to lose, as thus.
The cup of life is full of bitterness.'

“‘Of bitterness,’ said she, ‘mingled with sweet—
So much I would not miss the draught—Ah me!
Thou treasure of my heart! Self of myself!
I see thy infant smile, and hear the lisp
And prattle that were music to my heart.
And then thy blooming qualities were so
Perfumed with promise, and began to bear
The fruitage of a manhood rich in deeds

That gratify a mother's love. But thou
Art dead. Dead did I say? Not so. Not so.
Within this bosom thou art living still.
The past is more alive than when we called
It present; for I see it, hear it, feel
It here. And yet there is a void. What balm—
What balm can heal a mother's bleeding heart?
O Cain! The burden of a mother's life!
Hadst thou no pity for a mother's woe?
I nursed thee, tended thee to manhood's years
With fond solicitude. And now—and now—'

"Tears told what words could not, as from the sward
The father bore the melancholy charge.
The author of the nameless crime had fled,
In readiness to meet his other self,
Sure that the bias of her heart would make
Her ear a willing auditor to his
False-colored version of the guilty deed,
Whose dark atrocity he meant to glaze
Until he justified. But when they met,
He must perforce perceive her startled look,
And thence infer a change of countenance
That less indulgent eyes must note; at which
He seemed to see another self, and hear
The voice of execration from behind,
Hence fled to lose himself from common gaze.
The day's last hours rolled heavily away,
And Night was stationing her sentinels,
When Slumber dallied with his weary brain,
And 'mid her wantoning two altars and
A corpse were as dead eyes that stared at him.
Then in the silence thus his thoughts took form:

'Strange contradiction this! I left him as
Unconscious as the dust on which he fell.
He saw not, heard not, moved not, breathed not; yet
He seems to be about me. In the dark
I have a star-like eye that sees what in
The light swoons from me like the stars. His life
Went out in darkness. Is the night his day,
In which he comes with a reproach? In flesh
I could have set myself apart; but now
The closing of my eyes excludes him not.
Or is he present only as a dream?
But what are dreams? They may be shadows of
Realities that advertise us of
Approaching ills, as mine have been and may
Be yet again. For men may multiply,
Obedient to command, and look on me
The wrath of the forbidden deed, in which
Will be a deeper cutting than the deed,
Causing a lifelong agony within.
What cause provoked this conflict in events?
Not fault of mine, who had a good intent,
But His who from the dark of the unseen
Had hampered me with fanciful commands,
To have me kneel this, and no other, way
Before Him—just as though the manner of
An action were its soul—and then condemned
Me for a swerving step; provoking so
My choler that I did what otherwise
I had not thought. This says He loves me not.
Then how can I love Him? or loving not,
How have the look of love and do its deeds?
But He has power that cannot be withstood.
His throne is said to be among the stars;

Yet not so far but He can visit us.
Winds are His breath, lightnings the flashes of
His eye, and thunders emphasis of voice,
To make creation realize His power;
The very thought of which is terrible.
And there is no seclusion so concealed,
No darkness so profound, that I can hide;
No, not the bosom of the deepest sea,
Nor darkest corner of a dawnless cave,
Or I would flee to it and there remain.
Then all I do will be beneath His eye,
Hence I must placate Him with show of what
He wills, though it will be an irksome task;
For in His words there was a tinge of ruth.
But be I where I may, and come what may,
One still remains whom I can love—myself.'

"In that decisive hour he locked the door
Upon his banishment, and thenceforth lived
Within the circle that his selfhood scribed,
Embittered in his lonesomeness, and by
His attitude of will distorted his
Conceptions of the Infinite until
His homage was a dead formality,
And the momentous facts of human life
Were but half legible on memory's page;
While this rebuke induced callosity
Of spiritual sense, in which he saw
Not Mercy's autograph upon his cloud.
Hence to his progeny was the bequest
Of a distracted mind and heart, who could
No more transmit than they received; of which
Are records in the probate court of time."



CANTO X



CANTO X

The years to Satan were his working hours ;
To those behind, elastic fragments of
Eternity that stretched beyond the reach
Of patience. Hence he thought of little but
The scheme in hand, assuming that the hosts
Were waiting patiently for his return ;
While they were in a mood for mutiny,
Had aught more promising held out its hand.
But mutiny against the one who might
No more return, were throwing dust against
The wind, to have it blow upon themselves,
Or tearing up a mountain by the roots
To hurl it at a shadow. Yet within
Their bosoms raged a passionate tumult of
Desire to vent their disappointment, with
A smiting force, at something visible,
As chargers curbed and champing helplessly
The bits of destiny, when means they would
Devise to fuse their feelings into deeds.
With this intent they gathered at the mount
From which the Chief had taken exit, in
A throng so dense they pressed with toes to heel.
Above them all conspicuous stood the four
Whose counsel was the staff that sole remained.
Then Belial stept, with stately majesty,
And took a stand upon the highest peak ;

From whence his eye encompassed all the scene,
And with uplifted hand he waved a hush,
When all were as one ear as thus he spake:

‘Immortal and illustrious powers long doomed
To inactivity, what shall I say
In absence of our Chief, what do to rouse
Our lethargy to action that avails,
Either to countervail oppugnant power
That lays on us the burden of our state,
Or tranquilize the nerves of Patience to
Endure continued strain; for not
Our Leader must we think to blame for his
Delay, suspecting that we are no more
Than shadows flitting o’er the landscape of
His mind. The cause of this delay can be
No fault of his. Mayhap his hand is on
The lever of a task to leave which would
Imperil its success. Or seeing that
Our hopes are centered all in him, the Foe
May treat him as the whole of us, through him
To bring those hopes to nought and, leaving us
Forever leaderless as now, compel
Submission to the tyranny of His
Authority. Or, in malignity,
The concentrated power of all His hosts
May lay its hand upon the single head.
We all remember what he said about
The curse pronounced on him. The holding of
Him in duress may be the import that
The curse contained. But fact, not reasons, now
Concerns us most. To us he is not while
Conditions are and are oppressing us.

What, then, to do in these conditions is,
The problem of the now. My judgment is,
That any action is to be preferred
To none, and what antagonizes most
Were best. The very thought of being in
Oppugnance thrills my courage and my hope.
And should our efforts feel the crushing stamp
Of His fierce wrath, we still may riot in
The glory of attempt, and at the least
Display a courage worthy of ourselves,
And ruffle His tranquility; in which
Achievement were a savor of success.
Hear, then, what I propose, which is that, like
Our Chief, we go in venturous quest of some
New orb where we may emulate his deeds;
For which we have encouragement in his
Success, since there are other worlds, and what
Is once done may be done again. Not that
I minimize the task; but he has proved
Its possibility. True, his exceed
Our single attributes, but we may go,
Each with his host in mass, and force our way
To what may tempt our aptitudes.'

"Then came

The word of Mammon, thus:

'Great dignities!

Submission has the clank of chains; of chains
That we whose liberty has cost so much
Are not disposed to wear. Chain all the worlds
To some strong central stake of power, and leave
Them motionless until eternity
Grows grey, but leave us free till then; ay, free

To act with an unfettered Will. But ours,
In acting not, has been the freedom of
The dead, with us lamenting that it served
Us not, while every movement that we made
Was objectless, a whirling of the wind.
The words of Belial are the breath of life,
To rouse our energies and clear the star
Of hope. With him, I would not dare to blame
Our Chief, who, singly, has a world in which
To operate, resisted by his Foe
And ours. In glory of achievement he
May be absorbed, while having faith that we
Who erstwhile found this orb will venture forth
Into the deep, to find some fairer orb,
In which to exercise our stagnant powers,
And so develop them. In my esteem
His absence proves his confidence: for fear,
Or but the whisper of a doubt, had given
Him swifter pinions than the light to come
And make secure our steadfastness. We all
Remember well how scintillated his
Benevolence with hope and purpose that
Illuminated every mind with an
Expectancy to rule monarchic in
Some other worlds. In that his heart and hope
Are with us still. Toward that, in spite of what
Has intervened, let all our thoughts be turned.
Belial suggests a fourfold enterprise,
And sees advantage in attempts in mass.
Why not quadruple that advantage by
A unity of force: nor force alone
But skill, cooperating to attain

One common goal? In such a quest would be
Activity, and that itself would be
One quality of heaven.'

"Here Belial made
An interruption thus :

'One fourth of us
Can do what one alone has done, and by
The multiplying of our spheres increase
Our measure of responsibility,
And give our aspirations energy,
Making our godhood worthier of the name.
Admit the super-greatness of our Chief,
Which has no unit equal in our ranks.
In practice, it may find its equals in
Our multiples, and we as gods have rule
O'er separate worlds, with prospects widening as
Eternity keeps up its round.'

"Bacchus
With hand uplifted hushed the long applause,
And thus :

"My ears have often heard the roar
Of futile wrath, my eyes beheld the strut
Of braggart impotence, and I been dazed
Before the dazzle of our titles as
Our Fancy toyed with worlds, or thought the stars
Were dust that we could sweep from off the roof
Of space. But we are modest now, and but
Assume that worlds await the blessing of
Our feet. This visionary boast and hope
Comes like the vomit from a crater's mouth
That indicates a billious state within.
This modesty may still demean itself

Till some of us are ready to repent;
To creep into the shadows of the past,
On weary hands and knees; to have our eyes
Aflow with penitential tears; to have
Black Melancholy perch on us and croak
Humility; to own that we have been
In fault and merit chastisement. Mayhap
This estimate belies the fact. But lies
Are currency when truth is rare as gems.
It were a waste of our credulity
To close a sanguine hand and think that we
Have clasped impossibilities. Better
Accept with equanimity what *is*.
Then shake the past as dust from off our feet,
Nor fill the future with the phantoms of
A wish, to have them vanish when we think
To touch. Act as befits our dignity,
When circumstances put it thus to test;
The dignity whose innate qualities
Consist in being masters of ourselves;
In having clearness of the mental eye;
In keeping impulses in due restraint;
In making circumstances bow to us,
Instead of we to them. Indulge no more
In flabbiness of thought and mawkishness
Of feeling, thinking we are wiser than
Our Chief in what he knows and we know not.
But let me for the once recant and say
That so much bravery needs a vent, and deck
That bravery with the garlands of a rhyme.

Let the lightnings blink and blaze
Till the worlds are in amaze.

Let the wrathful thunders roll
As a curse of Nature's soul.
I can stand and brave the scath
Of their threat and of their wrath.

Let the specter of a nought
Be a bugbear to my thought.
Let it flit about the mind
Like a terror to the blind.
I would shrink into a dot
Until others thought me not.

So I brave the things that be,
Then from Fancy's nothings flee.
Next I treasure up with care
Relics of the things that were.
But the only things I save
Are mementoes of the brave.

Those words I dedicate to all the brave
Who brace their courage for a struggle with
The monster difficulties challenging
In space, yet shake to see a vacuum where
They would our Chief. Should some one soul the words
With melody, we might compose ourselves
With music—melancholy's antidote.'

"Then came a burst that smacked of merriment,
When Moloch took a forward step and thus:

" 'No word have I to favor new emprise;
For I recall our Leader's latest word,
Which bade prepare for his return, and is
Assurance that he will; and since he will,
I would be here when he shall make report.

Then count not Moloch as a partner in
Ambition to explore the sea of space
On which our Leader had such weary quest.
But should we enter on so great emprise,
In fourfoldness of mass, what welding power
Would make us one in thought and plan to fit
Emergencies? Or should we differ, what?
And what provision of experience have
We in our store to meet contingencies?
Would patience be in less demand than now,
Or failure leave us in a better mood?
But what would be success? to find ourselves
Confronted by quadruple power, ourselves
Divided into fourths? Or, what, should all
Go forth as one? Should we who differ here
Be more harmonious in our strategy?
And should we occupy some orb, what then?
If tenantless, what action would employ
Our powers? or tenanted, what unity
Were ours without a head? Change now the scene,
And see our Leader come to find that we
Have put a blot upon his word! As for
Myself, I find that word a refuge from
Impatience, nothing doubting that he trusts
Us while he waits for the maturing of
Such earth events as need his watchful care.
And why not we trust him whose all has been,
And is adventured still in our behalf,
In whom he centers his benevolent
Intent, and whose devotion plumes the wings
On which his aspirations soar. He knows
Our high ambitions, and his mission now

Is to prepare the way for their attainment.
In view, then, of a past and present that
Have earned and had our confidence, which one
Of us will vouch himself of greater mind,
Of truer heart and nobler aim? If such
There be, let him stand forth and publish the
Transcendent fact. Your silence is the soul
Of eloquence, and mightier than the roar
Of wordy cataracts. I take it as
Your heart's amen. Then let our patience prove
Its measure of vitality, assured
That what has been so long in ripening
Will have the mellower flavor when it comes.'

'Amen to Moloch's word,' said Bacchus, 'and
I should prefer to roam o'er every zone
Of this unsightly orb mumbling amens ,
Or searching for the ghost of nothingness,
To repetition of the state from which
Was here afforded us so welcome a
Retreat. The memory of that welcome has
A lingering sweetness still. If need, I could
Invent activity that would engage
The mind to weariness; could look upon
These mountains as so many monsters, and
Their caves as mouths that mock us, and myself
As wielding all the elements of force
To crack the ribs and scalp the heads of those,
And gag the windy insolence of these;
Could think the stars engaged in civil war
And I astride a sun, charging upon
Them with the terror of a thunder-whoop.
Activity? Ay, all of us can make

Activity, if only venting of
Complaints; and some, perhaps, already find
Relief! But let us find activity
In cultivating patience till we see
Our Chief.'

"Said Mammon, 'By his past our Chief
Has earned eternal confidence, nor in
Our hosts is ingrate so detestable
To stint that confidence, nor one but sees
That in his presence were a doubling of
Our strength. But confidence in him is not
The *him*; nor do we copy him by this
Our apathy. Nay, could he flash his thoughts
To us, no doubt he would rebuke us for
That apathy and bid us gaze upon
His blazoned record till we are inspired
To an enthusiasm that would emulate.
Why are we but to do; to do as do
The worlds—roll in our separate orbits, and
The whole sweep in the vast ecliptic of
A common plan, contributing our share
To the diversified phenomena
Of life, sustaining universal poise?
But on this orb we neither do nor can.
This, then, is not our place. But shall we hence
And leave our Chief—who *may* return—to think
Our absence proves our recreance? We need
Not so; but some may here remain to thrill
Him with the tidings of our quest, in proof
Of courage animated by his own.'

"Bacchus to this made prompt reply, 'Mammon,'
Said he, 'whose mind is father of this plan,

Is fittest to be guardian of his child.-

Then he it is who may be left behind.'

'The leader's place,' said Mammon, 'is in front,
Not rear.'

'But think,' said Bacchus, 'what a mind
Will be required to tell our Chief we are
Not here, but, in our loyalty, took flight
For everywhere! We need the fact before
Him in the glory of its magnitude.
Belike he would baptize our footprints with
His blessing, and explore infinity
To find our whereabouts, that he might see
The reflex of his greatness in our deeds!'

'So grave a problem,' Mammon said, 'demands
That Judgment don deliberative robes.'

'And keep his seat until our Chief arrives,
Who may be, even now, an auditor
Unseen.'

"So came antagonizing thoughts.
But every leader now was dumb, while all
The orb was as the sleeping room of Death,
In which they could not even hear him breathe.
Awhile they stood, still as a statue of
Suspense, and all the hosts melted away
Like some broad glacier in the August sun,
Scared by the apparition of return
To empty space. And so their problem had
A jagged edge that none dared seize. At length
The leaders wandered o'er the plains; Belial
And his in wrathfulness that fain would smite
If but a worm, could it be made to feel
With an intensity of agony.

Manmon and his, who wished the dust athrill
With an acquisitive impassionment,
That they might minister to something on
A lower plane. Bacchus and his indulged
In mental jugglery; made sentients of
Insensate things, and held communion with
Them all in lightsome mood; while Moloch wrapt
Himself in mantle thoughts, as lonesome as
A stranger in a city solitude,
Where life is largely windy rustle of
The forest leaves, with myriads dropping down,
His hosts as sentinels who waited in
Their weariness for dawn. Time swung his scythe
And mowed the years, leaving the swath behind,
Of which they took no note, since looking on
Before across duration's unfenced field.
At length their Chief was on his wonted mount,
And looking down across the scene, disclosed
His presence, when a tempest-impulse swept
Them all in eddies to surround the place
And hail him as expressed their ecstasy.
Silent at first he stood and gazed around;
And while he thus with a majestic pride,
His person seemed to have magnetic power,
With its enswathing scintillance, which would
Perforce gleam outwardly, his eyes like fixed
Stars in the sockets of the night when earth's
Deep northern sky is blackly blue. After
Impressive pause he thus regaled their ears:

 'Immortal potentates! Illustrious powers!
Your tensioned patience has a guaranty
Of due reward. I come the harbinger

Of hope; first to apprise you of a strife
In an arena where the laurels may
With ease be twined around your worthy brows;
To which arena I shall duly be
Your guide, when Opportunity flings out
The signal flag, which is unfurling from
The staff of time. The base of life to him
The apex of earth's various forms, is the
Insensate substance of the orb which, with
Himself, is cursed, earthening his nature till
He has an instability of will
That is a tendency to topple as
We push. To give the push will be our task,
And as he falls, a forecast of our lot.
The years in passing multiplied the race,
The pair transmitting their infirmity
Unto their progeny, of whom were two
Of sexual sameness with the sire, who by
Their nature had a lordship place of power,
With onus and responsibility
To succor and defend the weaker ones.
For their control I joined in strenuous strife
With him who in our former state aspersed
Us and seduced unstable ones. On him
It seems the Unseen One relies to be
His visible executive, which fact
Is inspiration of encouragement.
He with a consummate audacity
And subtle strategy confronted me
In efforts to secure the elder one,
In whom the race would find its cornerstone.
Then came the clash of mind with mind, of skill

With skill, and I prevailed. The younger had
My less attention, since the weaker one,
While in the elder was my quoin. So he
Succumbed, when my opponent saw in those
Conditions a numeric equipoise,
And felt a satisfaction in results.
But I possessed the key of fate, and knew
Myself as master of events, as so
It proved; for in the weakness of the one
I saw a breaching place and made a breach.
A season came when both agreed to make
An offering to placate the One unseen,
Whose character they estimated by
The past, which had obsessed them with its curse.
Plying the one whom now I deemed my ward
With words that were as perfume to the thought,
I lured him to present what could but give
Offence, which drew forth lightnings of rebuke;
While he withstanding, obfuscated by
Infatuating notions of a Seed
That was to curse, received an omen that
They deemed a benedicting smile, which then
I made a sting that roused the slighted one
To a revengeful jealousy, which in
Its murderous fury slew the favored one,
Without an ear for Pity's pleading voice.
So was fulfilling what had been foredoomed
By Him who breathed His curse on me: that I
Should bruise the Seed—its heel, my head, said He.
My heel, its head, say I; and there it got
The fatal stroke. But in that foreword I
Perceive a purpose to prolong the strife

Which, with the multiplying of the race,
Becomes inevitable, should He not
Withdraw and so confess defeat, which were
To give the last gasp of extremity.
Toward this finale we must point our means,
And in our courage find our providence;
For though the number of the race is small,
It is increased. In will unstable, it
Is not without ability. Though I
Have grooved the future that events may move
In it to the inevitable end,
There must be force applied to overcome
Inertia, and have him upon my palm
In whom is pledge of all. The potency
To multiply forecasts increased demands.
But these will bring activity that is
A source of bliss. Then welcome we the years
That can but come as almoners of good.
My Fancy has a license to behold
A picture of the future mirrored in
Time's glassy sea. I take that license, and
I see the representative of the
Unseen upon the summit of His might,
With reinforcing legions at command,
Imagining that in His arsenal
Are slings and curses that can scatter us.
I see my ward a countless multitude,
Fixed as the polar star in serving us,
On whom they vainly make assault, to seize
The will and hold it in the gyves of their
Authority. I see you leaders and
You loyal powers engaging them in a

Successful strife. But while I look into
That glassy sea, there comes a ruffle of
Contingencies; those harlequins that make
Our visions bubbles of uncertainty.
Uncertainty, I say—not of the *fact*
Of our success, but of the *how*, and the
Beyond, which is an orb of promise so
Far off that it defies our estimate.
Still, far or near, its glory shines for us.
Then let your minds prepare for glorious deeds
And glory will be yours.'

"That said, applause
Rolled forth as roll distracted thunders in
A mountain range. When ceased, he thus resumed:
'The race, I say, will multiply and call
For all your skill. Meanwhile your patience must
Submit to circumstances as the first
Condition of success. So few the race,
Your leaders only need accompany me
On this return, to exercise their skill
Preliminary to your entering on
The wider stage of action that will make
Demand for our united energies.'

"Those words put Satisfaction's teeth on edge,
And every one in disappointment looked
His fellow in the eye, yet nothing spake.
Nor word was needed to inform him, more
Than humans need a telescope to see
The sun; for he perceived an adverse turn
Of thought expressed on every countenance,
As though a hidden hand wrote there the word,
Distrust. So darkly yawned the gulf twixt his
Announcement and their hopes; to span which for

The crossing of their trust he added thus:

‘Conditions bind us with the links of a
Necessity that holds us in restraint;
And none can better than submit himself,
To bring the grandeur of his nature out
In glorifying conspicuity;
For to endure, with cool passivity,
Such ills as crush who are of weaker stuff,
Demands more heroism than to ride
The cataract that leaps in frantic foam
Among the savage rocks of strife. Be such
A heroism yours; and trust your Chief
As in the past you have so nobly done,
When darker prospects glowered. It is not mine
To modify the law that governs their
Fecundity through whom the Foe must be
Antagonized; nor is it yours to crowd,
With practical obstructiveness, upon
The subjects who are sensitive to brusk
Assault. I underestimate not what
To you will be involved in our departure.
Inaction will be an ignoble rust
That eats into the iron of the will,
And the long-stretching of duration—made
Such by your seeing not its ending—an
Obsession that will tantalize your hopes.
But patience that endures with fortitude
The storms of ill, will make your godhood shine
Like stars through broken clouds; for patience is
A strength of will that holds emotion with
An iron hand, and takes, without a flinch,
The angry darts of time and circumstance;

And it adorns us more than doing of
Conspicuous deeds. Then gird yourselves anew
With courage for the test.'

"In silence all
Remained in place, as undecided what
To think or do, when Moloch spake them thus:
'Most worthy dignities! You know your past.
You know what mind has planned for you, what skill
Has led. Who knows of one who better could
Have done? Not I. Do you? Who better knows
Than he conditions on the orb we go
To occupy? Not I. Do you? And who
Knows reason why his judgment may not now
Be trusted as in past? Not I. Do you?
By silence you confess your ignorance.
Then shall our ignorance be Wisdom's gag?
If you would quarrel, be it not with him,
But with the Power beyond, who is alone
Responsible for all our ills, and vent
On Him your blame in measure equal to
Your disappointment, while, in stintless dole,
You give our Leader gratitude and trust.'

"Said Bacchus: 'Go with us in thought as we
Shall be with you; and be assured that time
Nor place can make us other than our past
Has been.'

"Said Belial: 'We shall break down to
Rebuild upon the wreck the temple of
Our hopes, in building which your help will be
Required. How soon, the future only can
Decide; but sooner than will please the Foe.
In this be your encouragement, that while

You wait He fears.'

"Then Moloch added thus:

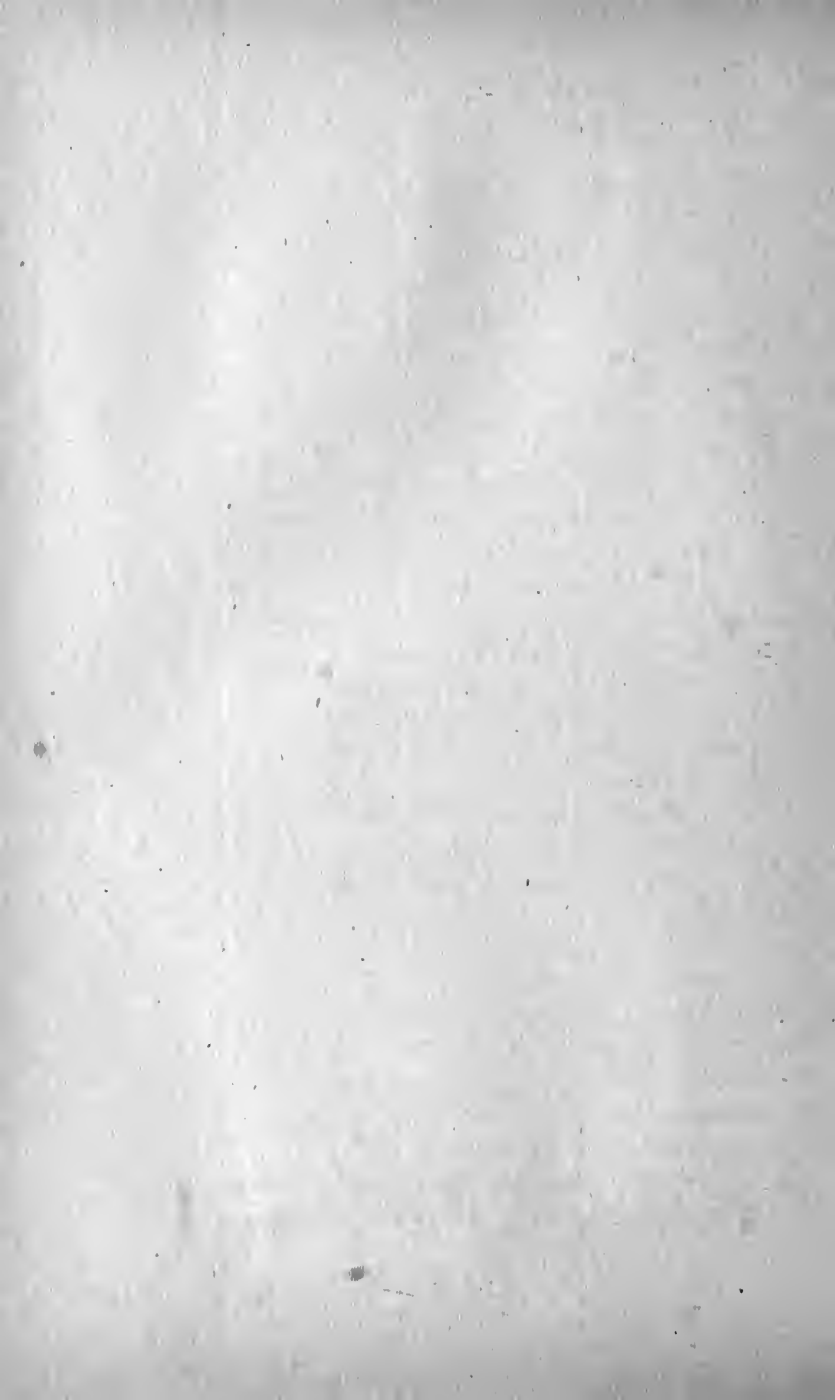
'I know not, care not, nor need you, more than
To know that what we know not he who leads
Us knows, and as he knows will do, which will
Be well, howe'er to us it seem. In such
A confidence I go, in such you wait,
And confidence shall have its due reward.'

"In silence lingering for a space, they then
Dissolved into invisibility,
And ere they left the darkening envelope
That wrapt the orb, the Leader spake them thus:

'Mark well this circumambient murk through which
We pass, since it distinguishes our orb
From all; and note the course we take into
The darksome deep. Now fix your gaze on that
Conspicuous orb in whose effulgence is
A central energy that both illumines
And holds those circling orbs in its embrace.
Let us proceed. Note ye that smaller orb,
Which, as compared, is insignificant.
In that are glorious possibilities;
For not by magnitude may potencies
Be gaged, nor values by appearances.
Infinities of issue balance there,
And as they turn this way or that may be
The destinies of worlds, and ours it is
To turn the balance. Let us now alight.
Behold that group of form erect. In them
There is the nucleus of the race through whom
To operate against the Foe. Study
Their scope and power of attribute, which is

Below our own. Become familiar with
Their weaknesses, then tentatively try,
With gentle caution, means to sway the will,
And take your cue from each experiment.
In nothing be imperative, nor use
Antagonizing oughts or questionings,
But, as the passions of the flesh incline,
So urge the Will to grant indulgence. And
Suggest such fantasies as will engage
The mind to a preoccupation that
Excludes all adverse thoughts. Watch well
The methods of the Foe; yet meet them not
With open clash but oblique subtilty
That shoves aside the impulse of assault;
And if in aught He shows efficiency,
Devise a substitute that has a smack
Of the original. And lubricate
With patience every effort you may make,
To have it creak not in Suspicion's ear.' ”

CANTO XI



CANTO XI

“The stream of years had rippled o’er the rocks
Of time with an unvarying sameness at
The rendezvous. On earth the race increased,
Filling the vacancy that death had made
With one who duplicated in his life
The lost; and thence a stream descended that
Expanded and o’erflowed the land; and the
Monitions of the voiceful past had found
The ear of Wisdom, and obedient feet
Were walking in her ways, since God was their
Supreme authority, and they so high
In character they were enrolled among
The chronicles of heaven as sons of God;
While those descended from the baser blood—
Affected by hereditary taint
And an environment unhelpful—thought
Of God as One of power to dread, and by
Mechanic service to appease, hence lacked
In gratitude, in love and all that lifts
The nature to its highest altitudes
Of selfhood, cultivating qualities
That but debase, progressing, age by age,
In quick acceleration of descent.
To this the underleaders lent their aid,
While Satan plied the favored ones, to give
The two a confluent character in ill.
And so the years kept rippling on and on,
Unnumbered by the fiends, save as those years

Were chroniclers of onwardness. Not so
With those they left upon the orb behind,
To whom their every turn of thought became
As though it were the record of a year;
A year, a weary *now* prolonged, with nought
That gave relief to its monotony.
Hence were they in a ferment of unrest,
In mute impatience moving to and fro;
Until a common impulse drew them to
The mount that seemed to bear the footprints of
Their Chief, when, with the informality
Of weariness, they vented thus their thoughts:
Alphea—

‘Both Chief and leaders gone, and gone I ween
Their thought of us, who drain the cup that they
Have filled; or He opposed is greater than
Them all with His impediments. Whiche’er
It be, the draught is bitterness.’

Zulah— ‘So thought
We of our Chief when gone alone, but he,
Despite impediments, returned and brought
Good cheer.’

Alphea— ‘What one could do is not too great
For all. When came the one not one was left;
Then now, of all, that one might come and break
The spell of our suspense, unless they so
Have magnified themselves they think themselves
Too great to think of us.’

Selfar— ‘Belike they think
We make our shift, and care not to return.
If so it be, what then?’

Zulah—

‘Wait for the then,
Nor fright us with thy phantoms of the mind.’

Selfar—

‘Wait for eternity to end, and when
Our patience ends begin again to wait?’

Ulsa—

‘Our patience has already found an end.’

Mitcar—

‘Your murmurs unbecome our dignity,
And lack the fiber of heroic stuff,
Since hurling javelins of aspersion in
The dark. Think not our leaders’ present is
A renegade that shames their past, lest we
Should shame ourselves by decking Ignorance
In Wisdom’s robes, exposing their misfit.
The Power opposing is unseen, His arms
In arsenals of secrecy, and now
He may have roused to crowd their path with new
Contingencies that keep our Chief at bay.’

Dobel—

‘Thy words insinuate his ignorance.’

Mitcar—

‘Not ignorance but knowledge limited,
Or all the universe were ignorant,
Since none there is to whom is nought unknown.
He is a center and his knowledge a
Circumference, implying bounds; hence why
His quest and waiting for developments.’

Rubah—

‘Think we of space, and view the whirling spheres
As dusted through its blue immensity.

Millions we see of size exceeding this,
 While this exceeds the earth of which we heard.
 None, surely, thinks his knowledge compasses
 Their size and elements, their movements and
 The dominating force that makes them move
 In harmony, and every one, for aught
 We know, enswarmed with forms of life, and all
 These forms provided with a staff of means
 On which to lean for their support. Not one
 Sole mind can have so vast a scope. Perhaps
 In every world there is a separate Power,
 Who reigns unquestioned in supremacy,
 And rules His subjects through subordinates,
 Himself in essence too sublimed for those
 Beneath to see.'

Mitcar—

'Assume that, He who reigns
 Reigns only o'er His individual orb.
 Who reigned o'er ours, I ween, took umbrage at
 The moot of our design in other worlds,
 And gave His jealousy a vent in our
 Expulsion thence; in doing which belike
 He threw a pall of desolation o'er
 The scene, so making it a monument
 Of wrath, as this discarded orb may be
 The cast off shoe of some departed Power,
 Where at our option we may exercise
 Eternal liberty.'

Omino—

'Or liberty
 Without the exercise, which is, as all
 Have realized, imprisonment, and has

Occasioned this our meeting and debate.'

Nutrah—

'And what avails our meeting, our debate?
Conditions have their own complexion, and
We have no flattering rouge that can improve
Them. Trust or distrust, we have got our dole,
And Fortune cannot be cajoled to give
Us better.'

"While he spake one came in haste
And thus addressed them:

Belfer—

'Hear ye all; for I
Have that to speak which all have need to hear.
We made this orb our refuge in a stress,
And then our rendezvous, from which our Chief
And leaders took their exit to prepare
An entrance into Fortune's realm, where we
Are hoping for a better state. Till then
We need not blush to sit at Fortune's feet
And eat the crumbs that fall from out her hand;
Which may be ampler than Impatience thinks.
Our thought has been that we alone have found
A refuge here, which thought intensifies
Our sense of lonesomeness. But, rousing from
The ennui of the thought, I ventured to
Explore the other hemisphere, in which
I made discovery of a spirit group
Whose attributes have sameness, while beneath,
Our own. Whether from some avenging Power
They fled to find their safety here, or were
In exile from some fairer world, I could
No further than surmise. But while I gazed,

My mind thus rose on speculation's wings:
Through some unseen, unknown affinity
The worlds are parts of one great whole, the Power
Sustaining them equivalent to a
Volitional activity. Perhaps,
Through some such power, ourselves, unconsciously,
Were hither drawn. And others may be now
As we were then or, in like distress like drawn,
Have found this orb; yea, all existing things,
Unconsciously, have spirit potency,
And so possess occult affinity
Susceptible of bursting from the bud
Into the bloom of consciousness. Could but
A sympathetic current pass along
The nerves of universal being, we
Might recognize the thoughts of all in all
The worlds, and feel ourselves as particles
Of an immeasurable body. Here
An interruption came as I perceived
The influx of still other spirits, whose
Incoming had the greeting of a groan.
Unseen, I heard them vocalize their woes
And fears, which were as though some inner wrench
Extorted them, and learned that erstwhile they
Were denizens, in grosser guise, of some
More genial orb till severed, spirit from
The grosser element, and banished thence
For contumacy of the ruling Power.
Then came a quivering influence through the void,
As though some startled world were shaking off
Its lethargy and agitating space,
When Fancy heard a faint abort of words,

Or flutter of half-feathered wings of sound,
 Which had a subtle quality that touched
 Me as an impact on my consciousness
 That they had come from where our leaders are,
 And were, belike, an earnest of results
 Obtained in conflict with opposing Power,
 Sent to assure us of successful strife,
 And stimulate our patience while we wait.
 For not the present rate of influx has
 Been longer that the operations of
 Our Chief; which fact is tally to surmise.'

Ferio—

'Thy information plunges us into
 Perplexity, and tempts to questions that
 Are answerless. Be whence they may, they say
 By their laments that they are in duress.
 Assume them outcasts from the earth. The Power
 That cast them out, if hither guiding them,
 Has knowledge of this orb—perhaps of us—
 And may be gloating over our estate.
 If exiled and as refugees in space
 They happen an asylum here, does its
 Accursedness of aspect lure the eye
 So nothing else is seen? But since they come
 Continuous, does some representative
 Of Power convoy them hither as the clinch
 Of His anathema? These questions asked,
 The silence mocks our curiosity.'

Omino—

'But Belfer's Fancy waited on his Will,
 And heard unutterable things, and I
 Would honor Fancy's word if it were not

That Fact and Fancy often contradict
Each other to the face.'

Ferio—

'Here Fancy has

A license from the Fact, and we may not
Ignore the deep significance, though wrapt
In circumstantial ambiguity.'

Nutrah—

'I fain would hear what Belfer's Fancy heard,
By capturing on the wing some telltale word,
Or some intelligible sign that draws
The lightning from a memory of their past.'

Ferio—

'And wouldst thou feast thine ears upon their groans?'

Nutrah—

'Why not? 'Twould give variety to ours.
The rounded world of being, like this orb,
Has hemispheres—its opposites—its poles,
On which it never ceases to revolve.
The bitter lends a sweetness to the sweet.
Smiles are a bow upon a cloud of tears;
And laughter finds its nourishment in groans,
Which are dead laughs that feed as dead leaves feed
A tree.'

Hiddo—

'Here is a graveyard of dead laughs,
Buried hell-deep, with indications of
Eternal fire.'

Ferio—

'I have heard groans enough
To send a shudder through the nerves of hell;
And I can think of them as coming out

From hell—the hell within us, and I fain
Would hear no more.'

Nutrah—

'But I would cater to
My curiosity. Moreover, what
Those spirits know may be the half of what
Ourselves would like to know; enough withal
To be assurance of the other half.'

Ferio—

'Well, go thou if thou wilt; and when thy ears
Are full, come back and laugh until our Chief
Returns.'

"Though leaving not their hemisphere,
They now were listening for the footfall of
Events at Fortune's door; listening, and all
The more impatient since they felt a hope—
Half brother to a certainty—that soon
The deadlock of suspense would end and bring
Relief. While thus upon their orb, the race
On earth, in willful haste, was rushing to
Inevitable doom. Three-score and up
Of life was man's apportionment, but in
Decades, not years, in which to utilize
The stored-up treasures of experience with
Such feats of progress as were otherwise
Impossible, so with the fewer piers
Bridging the history of the race. And as
Mankind, the fiends had progress in their skill,
Experience furnishing a key with which
To open every door into the mind
And heart, and with success grew diligent—
The leaders, further to debase the more

Degenerate ones ; their Chief, to stupefy
The moral nature of the sons of God,
With blandishments that through the flesh ensnare,
And sophistries that cataract virtue's eye.
So these were brought with torpid tolerance
To view the sins of the degenerates, and,
Obeying lust, merge life in life, and more
Esteem the dross that pleased the flesh than gold
Of character. As thus they more and more
Indulged, the sensuous life and mingled strains
Or blood developed prodigies of brawn
And stature ; men renowned for physical
Achievements—the incipient wonders of
The world—and so until the spirit dwarfed
And all were one in their depravity.
But while the pestilential evil spread,
Corrupting all besides, one healthy soul
Withstood the taint, with uncorruptible
Integrity ; and so his nature proved
Its fitness, as the prophet of the age,
To warn his fellows of impending doom ;
For which the Infinite commissioned him.
Thenceforth his voice rolled out the thunders of
Inevitable woe, to bring a quake
Of terror to the common heart, which lust
Had petrified, and make their after-deeds
A jury on themselves, to justify
The doom pronounced. The arch foe heard it as
A signal trump of danger and devised
To hush the voice. For this he waited till
The prophet, in a weary hour, was 'neath
A mental sky of wintry clouds, when in

The inner chamber of his selfhood he
Addressed him thus:

‘Thou hast nobility
Worthy to shine among the stars of life,
But art surrounded with a storm-belt of
Iniquity impervious to thy light;
Nor can thy constant warnings bring a tinge
Of penitence. Nay, threats of ill will but
Create a general enmity, without
Averting doom or mitigating its
Severity, and hence afflict thy soul
To no avail. Then why distract thyself
With fruitless toil? True, it is thine to warn.
But read the duty in its inner and
Profounder sense. Thy life is eloquent
To warn, and by retiring to the top
Of some sky-piercing mount thy act will be
Like nature’s silent forces, mightier in
Effects than sounds that make assault upon
The ear. Thus three advantages will come,
Linked hand in hand—escape from craftsman’s toil,
The wrath of the besotted multitude,
And better prospect of thy purpose gained.
But should they still unheed and bring the doom,
The safety of thyself and thine will be
Assured.’

“So would he lure the patriarch
To disobedience, hoping to involve
Him in the general doom. But sooner had
He smiled away the force of gravity;
For he who shut himself within the ark
Of truth when evil deluged all the souls
Of men, would not be recreant now; and hence

The watery deluge he prepared to meet.
Of this the fiend became aware; and though
He erst had noted not the flight of time,
He now aroused to realize a press
Of urgency in these conditions to
Engage the hosts behind, to counteract
The influence of the prophet's voice, in which
He saw at once both opportunity
And danger—opportunity to clinch
The coming doom, and danger should an ear
Attend to the prophetic note. So forth
He hastened to the rendezvous. And first
He reconnoitered to inform himself.
Upon one hemisphere he saw a throng
Whose banishment from earth his guile had caused;
All in lament with imprecations on
Their past. And on the other were his hosts,
Wandering despondently about in search
Of stimuli to high activity,
But all in vain, until their very thoughts
Became a weariness, their wishes a
Vexatious exercise, their hopes a dream—
A day dream, and eternity the day.
While viewing them, he saw the danger of
Emotional extreme when called to the
Activities of earth; hence he prepared
A caution in advance, and then disclosed
His presence as a star emerging from
The twilight into view, when suddenly
A shout went up as from a sinking ship
When comes a sail in sight. Rank behind rank
They thronged, breathless in their expectancy,

And soon were silent as an echo's ghost,
When thus he spake:

‘Ye gods whose patience has
Endured a strain that only gods could bear,
The day whose dawning strained the eye of Hope
Is bright upon the earth, inviting you
To strenuous effort in our glorious cause;
Which invitation I have brought to greet
Your ears. But know conditions first. The race
Through which we strike the unseen Power responds
In tottering weakness to assault. Spirits
They are in gross insensate stuff akin
To that of this unsightly orb; our task
To give it a preponderating weight,
Creating and developing desires
That, as indulged, will make the spirit an
Obnoxious thing to Him who rules, who has
Already disenrobed and banished in
His wrath unnumbered trophies of our skill;
To whither we have no concern to say.
Perceiving that our influence rules the race,
He thunders hopelessly a general doom,
Contingent on a penitential mood
Whose outcome will redound to our reverse.
We aim to neutralize the influence of
The threat, and so facilitate the doom;
A work in which you may participate.
In the rebound of change from this your state
To that, calm judgment must prevail, to keep
Your eagerness in due restraint, lest it
Should pass when Prudence bids you halt. To groups
Of you the work will be distributed,

So every group will have its part ; while on
The whole a general influence operates,
As gravitation in the universe,
To unify in effort and result.
Success depends on wariness, plying
Your arts with a persistent tactfulness ;
For too obtrusive or precipitant
Attempt may rouse your victims to resent
Your efforts, so defeating all your hopes.
Disturb them not with reasonings. Suggest
No thought of right or wrong, but silently
Assume that everything is in a state
That needs no change, save increase in the means
Of its indulgence, lest you should disturb
Their slumber and unlock their ears to hear,
Their hearts to heed, a warning voice. Should one
Incline to hear and heed, divert his thoughts
To coddling of his sensuous tastes. What more
You need to learn your leaders will instruct.
Farewell, then, to the past and hence with me.'

"Then came a whirr of sound and exodus
In simultaneous flight, as though each one
Had been a feather, and the whole a wing
Of mighty moving force that bore them on
To earth. So came they, but unseen by all
Save spirit eyes ; and soon, with eager zeal,
Not one of any rank but was engaged
As though the task to wreck a world were all
His own. While thus nefariously beset,
Mankind were not abandoned to the foe,
But legions of angelic ministers
Touched keys of motive to induce the will

To resonate in harmony with law ;
Showed dangers darker than the heart of Night,
And blessings radiant with the light of heaven ;
Those to deter and these allure. But the
Response was discord fit to quiver on
The nerves of hell. And so the streams that first
Had flowed apart were mingled, foul and pure,
Until the two were in pollution one ;
A loathsome residue the all of the
Once pure original, their very names
Denoting their degeneracy. When the
Monitions heard within were thus despised,
A warning voice assailed the outer ear,
In which prophetic thunder rolled the threat
Of universal doom. For six-score years
It rumbled, but they heeded not—nay, grew
More obdurate instead of penitent.
'Mid the debacle of depravity
The warning one and family alone
Remained allegiant ; he a lonely rock
In a tempestuous ocean, battered by
The billows through a starless night, giving
In deeds a concrete evidence of faith.
Timber he brought and all appurtenants,
Of which to frame a prodigy of skill—
At once a refuge and an epitaph.
Days, weeks and months were counted into years,
But with unflagging industry the work
Went on, the hammer-stroke commingling with
His voice in eloquent appeal. Beams found
Their place as words that write a felon's fate.
Then motley multitudes came thronging as

The work progressed, to scoff and jeer and sling
Opprobrious epithets, or wisely wag
The philosophic head, cite Nature's law
And precedent to testify against
The prophet's word, and then pass idly on.
The years became decades, and, one by one,
Grew gray with age and slept the wakeless sleep,
Until the twelfth took up its gavel for
The end. The nautical leviathan
Was now complete and ready for its charge,
When Nature heeded more than man, and sent
Her varied representatives to find
A refuge from the scath whose coming steps
Were near. More thoughtful ones beheld the strange
And ominous phenomenon, while yet
On hesitation's brink they stood in weak
Timidity that feared the eye of man.
The Day lay wearily on pillowy clouds,
And left grim portents on the western rim.
But revelers filled the ear of Night with shouts
And riot until, surfeited at length
With gluttony and lust, the thousands lay
And snored, oblivious of the hours, in deep
Forgetfulness. Now Mercy's door was closed,
And Justice held his rod above the world
As he of old o'er Egypt's parted sea,
When from their fortresses burst furious winds,
And sent their cohorts howling o'er the deep.
The sullen clouds in threatening blackness rolled
Till mountain bigness bowed them toward the earth.
Then zigzag lightnings rent them in their wrath,
And growled in thunder till the awe-struck plains,

In sympathetic unison, shuddered—
Groaned—sank, obedient to the tenor of
The threat; and e'en the mountains bent the knee
In reverence for the Will Supreme, gushing
Their tribute to the cataclysmic woe,
Till man and beast and reptile struggled in
Promiscuousness and terror to ascend
The mountain sides. Dripping, panting, up, up
They clomb. Rills, rivulets and torrents dashed
Obstruction. But the hungry roar behind,
Beneath, around, had maddening urgency.
At length they reached the highest peaks, men, weak
In heart as babes, cursing their folly and
Imploring Mercy's ruth. Women beside
The beast of glaring eye that swiveled round
And round in desperate stress, unmindful of
Each other's presence, danger banishing
Ferocity and fear. Still pursuing, the
Avenging terror lapped their feet,
Rose to the knee and followed to the waist.
Then plunged the beasts and struggled in the throes
Of helplessness. Higher—higher—higher!
Distracted mothers screamed and held their babes
Aloft. The gurgling water choked their screams.
They sank—rose—sank. A feeble wail and all
Was hushed, except the swish and murmur of
The waves that hummed, in dread monotony,
The requiem of a world. Far as the race
The rushing ruin went, and so fulfilled
The fateful prophecy. Where now the scoff,
The jeer, the well-slung epithet of crowds?
The philosophic incredulity

And revels that infernalized the night?
The answer, written by the hand of God,
Was in a dead world where the live had been

CANTO XII



CANTO XII

“The fiends were hovering o’er the watery waste,
Viewing the dead world as a prophecy
Upon the scroll of time that soon would be
Fulfilled in grandeur of achievement that
Would recompense their toil and skill, beyond
What Hope had dared to dream of, knowing not
That in the living was a germ of strength
That by the various processes of time
Would evolve a godlike character;
In which their ignorance and confidence
They felt the thrill that victors feel when borne
With bannered pomp from sanguine fields. And most
Of all, since over all, their Chief was in
Triumphant jubilation to think himself
The strategist whose plans and movements had
Secured results that mocked the efforts of
The Infinite, of whom his estimate
Was thenceforth minified, augmenting
The audacity of his contemptuous hate.
Nor these results alone he counted as
His gains, but in his triumph’s glorious hour
He saw his hosts more closely bound to him
In confidence. What more could be desire
To glorify himself? What more to prove
His power to wield the possibilities?
What more to open vistas to a sphere
That widened his supremacy? For this
He had adventured everything, and each

New tribute to his skill intensified
The burning fury of his pride and his
Ambition to attain. Now in the flush
Of an exulting egotism thus
He framed his thoughts: 'Glorious in power art thou,
O Lucifer! But where is Amplifer,
And Gabriel where, with their prophetic threats?
And where the labors of the servile host
That strove against me with a sanguine zeal?
Where is their mighty Master's confidence,
And where the Seed to bruise the serpent's head?
Where are they now? Let them come hovering o'er
This glorious scene, tell their success, display
Their trophies, compliment themselves, and chant
The glories of omnipotence! Here is
The sweet revenge of love—ay, love that loves
To smite a wrong and pay its compliments
To Justice. O great Lucifer! Who knows
What eminence eternity reserves
For thee? What secret talisman may give
Thee access to the hoarded potencies,
And leave thee mightier than Omnipotence?
But that thou art within thy normal sphere.
Omnipotence is regnant in the realm
Of matter, mind in that of spirit. Here
Omnipotence stretched out a wrathful arm.
But I provoked the wrath that moved the arm.
Thus is omnipotence the lackey of
My will, when mind and matter measure strength.
But I must share their gratulations who
Have shared my toils.'

"So saying, he disclosed

His presence in the void above the clouds,
And signaled to the rendezvous, when, as
The shadow of a storm-swept cloud, they all
Evanished, soon to congregate about
Him on his wonted eminence. He still
Was in the human form etherealized,
Its majesty so magnified that it
Was a suggestion of an infinite
Reserve, robed in a radiating light
Indefinite as rainbow fringes. There
He stood, his countenance enbeamed with smiles,
His eye aglow with pride; and in the sea
Of faces he beheld a kindred pride.
Thus with exultant confidence he spake:
 ‘Imperial dignities! Immortal powers!
Gods glory-crowned! How, how shall I compress
Within the rigid bounds of speech that which
Demands a measureless extent of praise?
I would that words might have the size of worlds,
And I a lightning fluency to send
Them thunder-footed into space, beyond
The most suburban orbs, in publishing
The story of your triumphs. Mightier are
Ye than the One that our credulity
Of confidence had thought of as supreme—
Creators both of heaven and hell. For what
Is heaven but that within yourselves, the flush
Of satisfaction as the springtide of
Your effort brings the freightage of success?
And what is hell but to expend one’s thought
And energy in great attempt, and have
The effort stranded in defeat? Such is

Our golden freight, and such His wreck of hopes.
Well are you jubilant with such reward,
And well have faith in our ability,
While having the omnipotence of mind.
Grant that the Foe can wield the physical
Immensities to our discomfort. We
Can more than match upon the higher plane,
By means that make the edge of his designs
Retund, as demonstrated by results,
With which the ages crown us with a crown
Bejeweled fit to dazzle Memory's eye;
The brightest gem of all—a buried world.
He doubtless had designed, by gradual steps,
The race to so develop as to reach
An ideal contemplating which His mind
Would rest in sweet complacency, but which
Disturbing we provoked a curse whose scath
Is an engulfment of His handiwork.
Thus we have made a pact with Death, who serves
Two masters in the name of one, and gives
To us the better service of the two.
Exult then as the victor only can,
And see in this incentive to renew
The hope of forcing Him to yet respect
Our power sufficiently to interfere
No more with our benevolent designs.
Or fail we there, we still can hate the wrong,
Resist the power, defy the Doer, and
From out the storehouse of experience bring
Our burnished arms and wage persistent war,
By His example doubly justified,
Even to wrecking of a thousand worlds,

If needed to preserve our liberty ;
For that withheld, existence has no worth.
And could we break the pillars that sustain
The universal frame, and crush the whole
With one tremendous crash, it were as naught
When wounded Justice calls to be avenged,
As now, in a pathetic agony,
He calls. For what can He opposing us
But be oppressor to the boundary of
His rule ; to whom a change of state, even
To none existence, were a boon ? That which
He is He must be, by necessity
Of nature, alwheres and always ; therefore
To be alwheres, always opposed, though in
The doing we should wear the sandals off
The feet of time. Belike ye noted, with
Myself, an inkle on the trestleboard
Of this debacle a design to rake
Success from out the mire of His defeat,
By preservation of a germ, from which
To multiply the race anew. Such a
Design forecasts an opportunity
To further glorify ourselves ; for which
We must prepare, nor wait until our chance
Grows rusty on the hinge. Conditions are
Half brother to the first I found, plus a
Corrupting taint where then was innocence,
And devastation where was fruitfulness.
Here, then, we have a coin with fortune's face
On one side, on the other superscribed
Its value in the characters of toil.
The curse is poison in the marrow of

The race, and hitherto its action wrought
Paralysis of will, and with the flight
Of ages more virulent grew. But he
Who represents the dot remaining of
The race, by long conformity has formed
A habit supplemental to the will,
By which it monishes to wariness.
As well attempt to poise a universe
Upon a fingertip as all this host
To concentrate our efforts on the dot
That sole remains. As with the primal pair,
I must alone approach this remnant on
The tiptoe of insinuating skill,
And captivate them unawares; to do
Which will combine pure delicacy and
Stark daring, since 'twill be to singly meet
The Foe, and put my shoulder underneath
The burden of a world. But seeing that
He clutches, in the frenzy of His hope,
At this new shadow, and His pleasure is
To test our powers anew, and by the test
Renew the strife that gloriously redounds
To His reverse and our success, I still
Would keep our powers in exercise, and add
New trophies to the old.'

“Here Belial gave

A sudden thought this voice:

‘The Foe Himself

Creates an exigence that may defeat
His purpose, while it ministers to ours.
This family He looks on as a gem
Enclosed within a casket, which is but

A prison house where Famine waits his chance
To seize their vitals with a fiery grip,
As there, becalmed upon a shoreless sea,
They dole their substance to the final crumb.
In that Omnipotence has overreached.

Or should the earth, unshrouded, wake to life,
She will but mock them with an empty hand,
And Famine finish what he had begun.

Then farewell every hope that hovered there.'

"Then Bacchus, with a sudden impulse, thus :
'Great Chief and ye triumphant ones ! those words
Are worthy of their godly parentage,
And rouse my memory thus to tell its tale :

I had a dream ; and in my dream
The stars were telling of the time
When Earth was in her virgin prime,
Her face with blushing hopes agleam.

I dreamt again ; and now they told
How Earth was wrinkled with her cares,
And in the stress of her affairs
The blood of hope was growing cold.

Again I dreamt, and heard them tell
That she was clutching at her past,
And thought she held a hand at last,
Which proved to be the hand of Hell.

My eyes then opened, when to view
Was One above her deathbed bent,
With saddened look and in lament,
Who saw my presence and withdrew.

'Those dreams, I ween, need no interpreter.
They are a prophecy, and prophecy
Is history in embryo. O Chief!
I scent the odors of the spring. I see
The future bursting as a bud. I see
The bloom that holds a promise in its heart.
I touch the fruit, which mellows at my touch.
I grasp the fruit and lo! it is a world.
Ay, it is ours, by right of conquest ours.'

"Here Mammon hastened with his word.

'We know

Not all the possibilities of force
To act on matter in extremity;
And here is an extremity that gives
The wheels of His omnipotence a creak.
But should He lift the watery covering from
The earth; should Famine gnash his teeth
In disappointed rage, and he who has
Withstood our utmost skill, and breasted with
Persistency the influence hurtled by
A world, remain still rooted as this mount,
Immovable, he—even he—must sink
Beneath the burdening curse into the maw
Of Death, and less combative ones succeed.
But should the strife continue, age on age,
Until the axle of eternity
Shall creak, I reckon not. Then the problem of
Activity will be forever solved.'

"Then Satan interposed this final word:

'If is a pivot where conjectures turn
This way or that. But while revolving they
Remain unchanged in their relation to

The *if*, leaving us still in ignorance.
Conjecture as we may, some *if* of force
Is in reserve to place these prisoned ones
Obstructively across our path. Yet Hope
May dare to meet the challenge of Despair;
For he intended to obstruct will find
At best a desolate environment,
And while in lonesomeness he languishes,
With naught provoking the belligerency
That conflict breeds, I may induce him to
Indulge in ease, as one ensconced in full
Security, and in the drowsiness
Of an unguarded hour expose himself,
Becoming vulnerable to assault.
But let events come jostling as they may,
The future, like the past, will make demands
For patience joined to watchfulness, and zeal
To wariness, which, duly exercised,
Will sway the helm as generations drift
Adown the current of the years, and bring
The race again into the rapids of
His wrath. So may the cons move and we
Acquire more glory as they go. But for
The present, what? As at the first, ye here
Remain, but not in like inaction, since
Are many trophies of your past exploits,
On whom to further exercise your skill,
And by its exercise keep burnishing
Your powers, while making them a blacker blot
Upon the scroll continually before
His eyes who gladly would avoid the sight.
But here or there, our ingenuity

Must pierce the heart of every obstacle,
And in the meanwhile let events evolve.' ”

My mind, through all thy narrative, I said,
Has been amazed that spirits great as they
Knew not the impotence of finity
Against infinity that so they dared
To feel and speak, to act and hope. Said he:

“The Infinite to finite mind is its
Capacity to *think* infinity.
But with increased capacity to think
Was tendency to magnify themselves
And minify the Infinite; and so
They bridged the gulf of their disparity,
And on receiving His rebuke became
In will oppugnant as in mind obtuse.
Men minify the Infinite, then dare
To willfully oppose, or, since He is
Unseen, deny the fact of His existence.
Then on the soul descends a starless night,
In which they sleep and dream of castles of
Security. And so the fiends, from least
To greatest, in gradation, egoize
In inverse ratio to their concept of
The Infinite, who works at the extremes
Of power. Nor man, nor fiend, nor cherub near
The throne can measure what He is or does
At either pole. Man pries into the depths
Of space through tubes that multiply the worlds.
Should he increase their power a hundredfold,
A thousandfold, what then? He would but see
A part. But He who made them all exceeds
Them all. In them is manifest His power.

The other pole displays His mind in the
Diversities of form and life; the least
Of which would tax the best developed mind
Of man, who knows not all the problems in
A grain of sand—its composition and
Divisibility—or in the air,
A sound, a ray of light—all vehicles
Of the almighty energy—and less
Of life; its multiplicity of mode,
With its adapted means of sustenance,
In plant, tree, polyp, animalcule, mite,
The lifeful atmosphere and teeming seas;
Bird, reptile, beast, and up to man.
But Satan saw these physical displays
With countessfold more comprehensive mind.
Yet were they all to him but evidence
Of physical omnipotence, himself
As greater in the mental attributes.
Could he have seen the Maker as he saw
His works, then made comparison, he had
Beheld himself in insignificance.
Yet that, though holding in a bondage of
Restraint, had been no guaranty of love.
But he was blind to their disparity,
Hence had an overestimate of self,
Which was the germ of an ambition that
Presumed on insubordination. And thus
His nature were contaminated in
Conception and volition, thought and deed,
All aggravated by the ghastly pomp
Of that catastrophe, on which he gazed
With an infernal gloat, while thinking this

An earnest of success that shadowed forth
The end; whereas 'twas but a quaver of
The providential shaft that yet should reach
The mark. The purpose of the Infinite
Is orb'd, and moves in the ecliptic of
His mind, directed by the gravity
Of will. Ere coalesced the elements
Of earth, the thoughts and deeds of man were in
His eye as human memory visions what
Is gone; so sure that no contingency
Was in the womb of the unwrought; for one
Contingency implies the possible
Miscarriage of His plans, and this that He
Is fallible, which cannot be. Thus He
Ordained whatever has been, is, and is
To be. Yet had the recreants no excuse,
Since under no necessity to sin
More than compulsion to prevent. Hence He
Removed them as the curseful cause, and kept
The faithful one to be the father of
The second world, whose end will foot
Results in human destiny. And not
Till then will failure and success be seen,
Since they were measured by finalities."

CANTO XIII



CANTO XIII

My thoughts were lost amid the watery scene,
When he resumed :

“To earth the future was
A pall upon her hopes, a midnight to
Her eye, and rested as a seal upon
Her lip; for not a chirp, a trill, a bleat
Was heard, or seen a blade or burgeoning
Of tree or vine, or aught besides a vast
Expanse of sea and sky. Then, re-enrobed,
She entered on a honeymoon of life.
The slime that lay on plain to mountain top
Gave place to sward, to leafy tresses, to
Chromatic splendors and the impulses
Of irrepressible activity
That thrilled the nerves of all things animate.
The arch foe came, nefarious in intent,
As to a second Eden, hoping he
Might duplicate results, with subtler arts
To meet experience of the human with
Experience of the fiend, since the few earth
Replenishers had ventured from the heights
Of Ararat to form the nucleus of
A second world. And first he sought to snare
The patriarch, in manner not to shock
Him with suggestions of an overt act,
But with insinuations to the flesh,
To lull him into inactivity.
Hence in the midday’s enervating heat,

When soporific vapors filled the air,
As 'neath a shady canopy he lay,
His thoughts as bubbles lilting dreamily,
His mind was led to this soliloquy:
'The world that was is not. The agony
Of strife with obduracy is past, and from
The chaos of ungoldiness rolls forth
A world of order, righteousness and peace.
Quiet—peace—rest. How sweet to have the mind
Soft-pillowed in repose—repose well earned—
The husbandman's repose at close of day,
Sipping the juice fresh from the winepress of
A better time, its lees left all behind.
Let others face tomorrow's toils.' When came
At length dusk-sandaled Eve, dark-mantled Night
And crystal-coronated Morn, rousing
Whate'er had life to feel the general thrill
Of Nature's wakefulness, the earth seemed full
Of laughter and activity, and in
A glad rebound of soul the very breeze
Had found a voice for him and said within:
'The ark was all thy earth; all earth is now
Thy ark, and thou its captain on the sea
Of time. Brave in the past, thy future calls
For skill. The storm that put thy courage to
The test is o'er, and death in one vast shroud
Has wrapt the mutineers, while trade winds fill
Thy sails. Then watch thy chart and compass, nor
Let once thy hand be off the helm, that so
The prow, through the long stretch of ages, may
Be pointed toward the port of safety, where
The treasures of the Infinite are stored.'

When heard, the voice was as a mandate to.
The soul, in which he read the parable
Of duty, then with strenuousness obeyed.
Another year. The earth brought forth with more
Than wonted lavishment. Luxuriant vines
Were loaded with enpurpled wealth, which to
Preserve engaged the patriarch's care. But time
Said, Presto! Then corruption's wand infused
A sparkling fire into the vat, when, with
Incautious freedom, he imbibed and lost
Himself in inebriety, which gave
The fiend a chance to turn the key of craft
Within a pliant member of the home,
Whose nature he had fitted to despise
A filial sanctity, so that he viewed
With levity what reverence had deplored.
As tells one drop the saltiness of the sea,
So told his act the nature of the man,
Which in the universal leprosy
Received contamination's touch, and now
Incurred a father's lasting curse, who saw
With a prophetic instinct what the deed
Foreboded in the influence that would flow
Adown the years. More clearly Satan saw,
Whose guile had brought the fatal touch, and now
Devised to spread the virus through the race.
For this he made his presence known upon
His wonted mount to the illustrious four,
Who hailed him with expressions of delight,
As weary watchers hail the blush of dawn,
And stood as courtiers in the presence of
A king, with reverence for his rank, when thus

He gratified their ears: 'Victorious ones!
Your memories need no waking nudge to bring
A vision of the conflict past, with all
The glory of the triumphs gained; triumphs
That are emblazoned on the scroll of time,
To last when marble crumbles into dust—
Ay, to mock eternity's defacing hand;
All which the future offers to encrown.
New harvests wait the sickle of your skill,
For which I need instruct but little how
To reap. He who has been the Foe's one hope
And our one obstacle has passed away,
And less resistant ones remain, to bend
Like reeds upon a river's marge before
The onswEEP of the Power that overwhelmed
The parent world. Already I have made
A pliant one succumb, attracting to
Himself a lightning curse that shatters all
The pillars of his nature and entails
A helpless weakness on his progeny,
Inkling withal the possibilities,
Inviting us to their development;
For in this weaker one's example is
A lever influence on whose end we need
But press to move the others as we will.
Indulged in a debauch of wanton thought,
It will debilitate their moral powers.
For this the new environment affords
The means. Earth's lap is full beyond their need.
The valleys bend beneath the burden of
Their fruits; the plains are decked with gold, the hills
Ablaze with prodigal magnificence,

And they sole heirs to all; the consciousness
Of which creates a sense of dignity,
The wings of whose ambition flutter to
Ascend into an atmosphere of great
Exploit. So is a premium put upon
Our skill, since in the realm of mind we meet
The Foe on vantage ground. The prospect of
Our conflict on this higher plane thrills me
As old wine fires the blood of men, and I
Am full-armed in resolve to make the past
An eclipsed orb compared with that to come.
Prepare ye, then, for deeds of glory that
Will make your godhood shine more lustrously.
Of our designs inform your followers, and
Enjoin their patience to endure your absence;
Then back to earth, where I will more instruct.'

"That said, he disappeared, and soon the four
Gave signal to their hosts, who thronged the mount,
Mingled promiscuously in haste, alike
In high expectancy. Belial first brake
The silence, eager to be heard, and thus:

 'Triumphant dignities! Ye well deport
Yourselves when Patience lays her yoke upon
Your neck, to draw the heavier burdens of
The years, and well ye do when Courage calls
For the heroic deed. To this your past
Has unimpeachable attest, and is
A pledge to Fortune for the coming need;
A need now knocking on the door of time.
Our Chief is once again upon the earth,
And bids your leaders, as before, prepare
The way for your renewed activities,

In which new jewels will be added to
The diadem of your success; for which
We are about to leave the rendezvous.'

"Here Bacchus thus: 'To leave you, Belial says.
But you will be with us and we with you,
As in two separate yet connected rooms,
Whose walls, since memory takes no note of space,
Are all in view, your lack no more than that
Of lost activity, which there, not here,
Must be renewed. And as to patience, it
Is a familiar robe that we have worn
Until it seems to be our outer self,
Which Hope keeps brushing clean from dust.
So will you prove it till our Chief returns
And bids you don the robes of royalty.
Therefore we only say, as humans do,
Good night, anon to say good morning, with
A smile. Good night and pleasant dreams.'

"At once
They seemed to float away like scudding clouds,
And soon were on the earth, where they beset
The remnant of the race, which showed again
Diversity of character, while all
Were one in plans for solidarity.
There the infernals, ravenous as beasts
At scent of blood, looked into depths of an
Imaginary hell, in which the few
Were multiplied to millions, writhing in
The fiery flames of hate, and every one
A fury, raging to annihilate
His fellows, and the whole as welded to
A thunderbolt of power defiant of
The Infinite. To kindle, fan and add

Combustive passion unto passion till
The roaring flames of rivalry should make
The imaginary veritable hell,
Become at once their purpose and their aim.
Satan had seen man's mental restlessness
From the first necromancer calling up
The spirit of melodious sound; from him
Who made the family a fortified realm;
From him who forced from earth the secret of
Metallic strength; from him who utilized
That strength and gave the nail and cunning tool
A mission as the agent of his mind;
From the conceptive and constructive skill
In unifying of the divers parts—
The base of architectural skill—
In due proportion to the object sought;
On, on to emulation's last device
To fill the niches of necessity,
And on to the stupendous miracle
Of skill that held earth's prophecy of life.
The wonder of it all was in his mind,
And in mankind the spirit of it all,
As a momentive impulse to exceed
The grand achievements of the past, of which
Aware, he called the leaders, to instruct
Them in the cardinals of craft. Above
A mountain's hoary head they met, when he
Addressed them thus:

'Welcome to strife renewed,
To glories and rewards outshining all
The past as stars outshine the pearls upon
A meadow's breast. Our skill is challenged by
The new conditions of the race, which, as

Already said, is fledged for flight ; a flight
That would not stop beneath the stars, and hence
Invites to conflict on a higher plane.
Here is our cue—to daze them with a sense
Of independence that will make them feel
A goddish greatness, as in monarchy
O'er all the earth, whose might, in mind and thew,
Can mock the whimsies of the elements
And do most goddishly. Unite them, then,
In schemes that titillate their vanity
Till aliens to, and then despisers of,
The Unseen Power ; and this by such oblique
Suggestion that, while following, they will think
Themselves unled ; in doing which ourselves
Will feel a greatening of ourselves. The what
And how of all are in the clay, and Time
Will furnish molds to fashion them.'

“As thus

Instructed, they inflated more the bloat
Of men's ambition, till assertive ones
Ignored the Infinite, to make themselves
The pivot of a universal power,
And in imagined independency,
Planned what foreshadowed coming pyramids
And their affinities in massiveness.
A tower should cleave the clouds, in strength
To mock the wrathful elements and the
Keen claws of time, immortalizing them
In fame's eternal chronicles. Stone they
Had not. Albeit ingenuity
Balked not but, stepping o'er the fact, passed on,
Making their difficulties but a spur

To urge their efforts to the goal. Then in
Their hand the clay became a substance that
Could look upon the grave of centuries,
And block on block was laid and tier on tier,
Till all exulted in assured success.
And Satan, who was father of the thought,
And underleaders, who gave stimulus
To zeal, rejoiced as those who had the goal
In sight; when He who rules the elements
And could have scattered all their works in dust,
Came silent as the breath of Pestilence,
Bringing confusion to the mind and lip,
When they who were as tribes, in trine descent,
Were separated of necessity,
As vocal limitations made demand,
And so became a triple eponym,
Thence to pursue the course of destiny,
Each having all the knowledge of the whole,
And a momentive impetus from past
Attempt. Scattering and multiplying still,
Developing hereditary traits,
With variations in a unity,
They so were fitted for distinctive spheres,
To make the rounded manhood of the race.
At first were emulations to excel
In all that glorified their vanity.
Then emulations gendered jealousies,
And jealousies developed into strifes;
When their ambition was to monarchize,
Their greater intellects but making them
The greater foes. Still lingered with them all
A dreamy recollection of the lore

That showed Heaven's autograph, in which was truth
Enough to furnish raw material for
A lie; though one alone, as heir, preserved
The heirloom with a reverent trust, as men
Now proudly note the incidents that shed
A luster on their heraldry. Mankind,
When deadened thus in sympathy, and with
An eclipse o'er the face of truth, trampled
On weakness with a ruthless foot, and heard
A music in its groans that charmed the ear,
Then danced itself to dizziness; from which
Initial brutishness the laws of men
Receive their animus, and oft are void
Of pity and the mollifying sense
Of brotherhood; and Justice, seated on
A bench of ice, his heart a frozen thing,
An iron gantlet on his hand, smites those
Laid prostrate at his feet and calls it *War*,
And decks the horror with a jeweled robe,
Then chariots it with pomp and trumpet blare.
So Satan, gloating o'er the woes of men,
Would have his waiting hosts participate
In earth's infernal carnival; with which
Intent he visited the rendezvous.
The farthest scattered saw and hailed him as
His presence he disclosed; more welcome now
To them by the long fast of absence and
The feast that expectation spread before.
When died the echoes of their long applause,
He thuswise thrilled their hearts:

‘Ye loyal ones
Who never fail when Duty's trumpet calls,

I seize that trumpet, and I blow a blast
That would arouse a mummy into life—
A mummy, and your hopes are mummies that
I wish to have unswathed and vitalized.
Your chiefs earth garlands with the laurels of
Achievement, and invites you all to share
The glory of triumphant deeds. Mankind,
Of which a germ alone was left, is now
A scattered multitude like noxious weeds.
They planned to have a local fixity,
Like beasts that huddle fearful of a storm,
When I incited to activity
That set at nought the will of Him unseen—
Ay, smote the cheek of His authority.
That roused His choler to avenge itself
Upon their tongues, so alienizing them
In speech, and parting them in radii toward
The earth's periphery, from which they strike,
Antagonistic each to all and all
To each. To keep them in belligerency
Will be your task, performing which you will
Be moving forward toward the goal where Hope
Has filled our cornucopia with success.
Already they are mad-eyed, glaring their
Animosities at prompt. Ay, they
Contend with mutual hate that sees not, hears
Not, seeks not aught but how to serve itself.
Hence, as I say, 'tis ours to widen still
The breach; to use them as so many fists
With which to smite each other to the fall;
A feat that well might give the bones of Death
A rattle of delight, to think we thus

Compel the Maker to behold His works
Incited to antagonistic strife,
With clash and clang and havoc of
Infuriate hate doing the way we prompt;
As yet they shall with more efficiency.
To such a prospect what have you to say?

"Their answer was a thunder of assent.
'Ready!'

"We tingle with desire for it.'
'To earth!'

"To earth you say. Then follow me.'
"That said, with vapor lightness he arose,
When silence turned into a breath of sound,
As when a pinion spreads for sudden flight,
And back he led to earth, with vigor to
Renew the diabolic work; where soon
Not one of all the race but was beset
By such as found his temperamental bent
Most pliant to their special aptitude.
In individuals they conspired to make
The spirit bondman to the flesh, and so
Succeeded that, as moved the years, mankind
Became responsive, till the nebulous
Communities began rotating as
The passions lent a whirling force, and took
Completed form as individual worlds;
Yet not with gravitative harmony,
But humans, in the tyranny of might,
Grew demoniacal—as Jungfraus in
Ambition's towering Alps, snow-clad in
Their sympathies, and horror-smiting when
The thundrous avalanches of their wrath

Were loosed. Forgetful of their brotherhood,
They massed themselves antagonistic, these
To those, in savage mood; kept all the earth
Empurpled with their gore, and left behind
A desert whitened with the bones of men.
Thus rose the tyrants of an age, and then
Decayed within the deadening clutch of some
Voracious parasite, which fell in turn
Before some other parasite. So dark
Were men in mind and in their heart perverse.
From out the gloaming of a cloudy dawn
Rose Khita with a gourmand's maw for power,
Gorging herself as if to gulp the earth,
Till Misraim interfered and shared the prey.
Then forced her way to super-eminence,
And at the climax of her proud estate
Ground nations twixt the millstones of her might,
By her oppressions prompting the revenge.
And her magnificence the envy, of
The world. In paying homage to the brute,
She gained a brutishness of character,
And perished as the brute. A motley host,
As by a whirlwind impetus, was swept
Together, and Chaldea from the mass
Arose to temporary splendor, which
Assyria, as a simoon, blasted and
Assimilated; in her heart a brute,
Her head a fiend, with skill to execute
At the dictation both of brute and fiend.
Then Babylonia, the preceptor and
Successor, pattern and absorber of
Them all, became the world's great god of power,

Affecting such achievements as would mock
The blazonry of Time. But not with long
Impunity could Time be mocked; for though
The psuedo god had fattened on the past,
Her fatness tempted Medo-Persian gust,
Which glutted not until she picked the bones
Of a huge continent. Thus came they, one
By one, like beasts, devouring and devoured,
And left their skeletons upon the sands
Of time. From out the desolation then
Appeared transcendent Greece, emerging like
A mountain out of mist effulgent with
Meridian splendor that reflected, while
Increasing, the esthetic glory of
The ages. Imagination monarchized
The mind. The passions were exalted to
The virtues of the gods, in copying which
Men wallowed in the mire of sensuousness,
Debasing so their noblest attributes,
The soul as darksome as a cave in which
Stalacites hang in beauty cold and dead,
And left her helpless in a serpent's coils,
The Macedonian meteor having burst
And left confusion in its wake. Then swung
Another theater its doors, and showed
Another set of wrestlers on the stage.
Phenecla, having gained the fullness of
Development, would test the thews of her
Amphibious power, and Carthage dared to thrust
A borrowed lance against the shields of Rome,
Provoking a retaliatory wrath
To execute exterminating vengeance;

So satisfying both her greed and fear.
Then stood the conqueror astride the world,
And in the rigor of depotic might
Became a cruel vintager, the world
Her vintage, clustered nations gathered to
The winepress of her greed, their juices drawn
In trickling streams of blood, still to increase
Her huge obesity. The voice of her
Authority filled all the earth, as though
It were one ear that heard no voice but hers
And, hearing, made her feet a shrine. When grown
Thus plethoric and glutted with excess,
She had attained the two extremes—the heaven
Of intellect, the hell of character.
Thus empires rose, whose transient glories fain
Had made the very sun look down from his
Imperial throne and stare astonishment.
And during all, the human mind kept on
Developing in rugged massiveness,
When the stupendous in achievement was
The vogue. Proud Egypt would immortalize
Herself in pyramids and Karnacs, and
Still prouder Babylon, with dazzle of
Her greatness, blind the eye of Rivalry.
Their still-expanding powers incited them
To reach new ideals of the intellect,
Which rose in glittering splendor, height on height,
As Alps, to reach the region of the gods;
When Greece with her voluptuous genius tranced
Mankind, her visions and her wizardry
Of head and hand impressed on concrete things,
Imparting quasi animation, and a

Charm that fascinates the eye of Time,
Which looks on them as having had a touch
And glamor of divinity. Then Rome
Appropriated, bodied and ensouled
The glories of the intellectual world,
And strove to give men's concepts of the gods
An anagramic unity. And e'en
These phantoms, these imaginary noughts,
Were fashioned by gigantic intellects
Exaggerating human qualities
That, unlike Egypt, scorned to grovel as
Inferior to the brute. So they upraised
The intellect, strengthened and fitted it
To soar in vaster and diviner realms,
From loftier peaks of thought to peer into
The clearing atmosphere. Satan, who saw
And fostered, comprehended not the geist
Of these conditions, which were pregnant with
The ideals of milleniums noted in
The calendar of time, but thought they were
Developments that would, as erst the flesh,
Debase, and sink men in presumptuous pride.
But He who gave impulsion to the first
Beheld the last, anticipated and
Prepared the providential grooves in which
Should move the wheels of this development;
And through the moral chaos of the years
His spirit brooded o'er the darksome void."

CANTO XIV



CANTO XIV

“Let there be light! So spake the Infinite,
Then flashed the sword of His omnipotence,
When from Chaldean night the patriarch
Of Ur emerged and struck the kindling spark
From which a flame should start and widen in
Its area through the ages, until all
The earth be glorious in the light of truth.
Without the pomp of earthly state, he had
The grandeur of unwavering fealty
To the infallible authority,
Made so the spiritual father of
The race, who on Moriah stood the test
Of faith, pointing with typic finger thence
To Calvary, whose cross was as the world,
And He thereon love’s true synopsis of
The mind and purpose of the Infinite.
As Time’s kaleidoscope revolved, it dropt
A rustic group, which held the heirloom of
The sainted one, amid the thrill and glare
Of Egypt’s intellectual life and light.
With sympathies and interests interfused—
The ostracism of conditions as
An isolating and impregnable
Defense against seduction by the base
Environment—the stamp of bondage gave
The insignia of autonomy,
In furnishing the base of nationhood;
To all of which the Archfiend craftily

Gave ready aid, divining these events
As a repression of development,
Whose ultimate would be consignment to
The lowest level of depravity.
But now began to dawn the Infinite's
Designs, in which He proved supremacy
O'er all that Egypt deified, and His
Paternal favor toward the groaning ones
Who bent beneath the burden of the yoke;
For whose deliverance one was snatched from out
A watery sepulcher and fondly nursed
And tutored in the royal lap and school,
Then hardened by experience for the toils
Of leadership. Their fetters broken, soon
They were exhilarated as they breathed
The air of liberty. The tented host
Had restful halt, when clomb their leader up
The cloud-capt, thunder-guarded mount, where the
Invisible would fill the atmosphere
With awe, while giving man the cornerstone
Of the eternal law on which should rest
The highest ideals of the coming time;
Ideals exceeding in enduring strength
Egyptian pyramids of thought. This to
The fiend was Fortune's favoring hour, in which
Was offered an inviting hand; and now,
To grasp it, he appeared with leaders on
A distant mount, in wonted majesty
Of person, and envenomed speciousness
In his address, which vented thus:

'Ye great

Immortal potentates! We meet to take

An inventory of affairs, and thence
Deduce the modes of policy to thwart
The Foe. As known, these fugitives were in
Our grip, squeezed until being lost its last
Sweet drop of juice, and was a dry rind of
Soul-deadening drudgery. The Foe, aroused
To measure our advantage, interposed
With physical phenomena until
The final weapon left His armory;
Which juncture called for counteracting means.
For there was inkle of some dark design—
A sunset cloudbank that foreboded storm.
Then with tempestuous thoughts and fears I lashed
His mind who meted out their state, making
Him deeper root his purpose to contemn
The mandates and defy the prowess that
Presumed to strike at his authority.
But physical omnipotence prevailed
To bring the physical result that now
Obtains; which is a change of state, but not
Of character. That character 'tis ours
To eternize in opposition to
The Foe. So may we rouse omnipotent
Resentment that will set on them the foot
Of an exterminating wrath. He who
Has led is absent for instruction, as I
Ween, to lantern him through darksome days;
And with him goes the visible—the link
Twixt them and the Invisible—which fact
Begets our opportunity, and bids
Us mold our means to fit the day's demand,
That so omnipotence may have its foil.

For this, conditions must be made our guide.
Note first: These fugitives have Egypt in
Their blood, its drudgery their curriculum
Of life, with nothing known of aught above,
Beyond or better than the past. Here is
Environment as unfamiliar as
The landscape of a star, the aspect of
These bare and barren rocks a prophecy
Of want; rebound from toil that gave no time
For thought, to inactivity that rusts
Their every faculty, and brings the cares
Of newly-found responsibilities;
The future a prolonged to-morrow thronged
With dubious hopes that have a harlot's rouge.
All these will bring a sense of lonesomeness,
Depressing as a winter atmosphere
That spreads in icy blackness o'er the earth.
The edge of these conditions it is ours
To whet until it cuts into the soul,
And Memory has an odor of the things
Behind, forgetful of the lash and toil,
And Egypt smells of paradise. Then as
They feel abandoned by the trusted one,
And crave an intermediary between
Themselves and the Invisible, Egypt
Must furnish them the visible, as both
A souvenir of what is lost and that
Which represents Omnipotence. Thus we
May bring them to the footstool of the brute,
And thereby thwart the Foe; so whether He
Destroy or spare, we shall provoke Him to
Defeat Himself. Go, then. Accentuate

The tone of these conditions as you find
Their ear most ready to receive.'

"At once

They called contingents to the scene, who found
The fickle host as clay for potter's hand,
And gave the mind and heart the grosser form
Of Egypt's thought and character, till they
With molded trinkets effigied the brute,
Then held an orgy in devotion's name,
And so provoked a scourging of rebuke,
Repeated oft through twoscore weary years
Of zigzags in obedience and relapse,
Straining their leader's patience to its break.
So went they till the Egypt-tainted blood
Was purged, the old life as a father's dream,
Which perished in the flush of fortune's dawn.
But ere their feet could reach the goal of hope,
Transgression had its culminating stroke,
In vindication of impartial law,
Which would not pass the leader's trespass by.
So there, alone, from Pisgah's top he glimpsed
The land that in prospective long had filled
His eye, and answered to the call of Death.
Then went a thrill of jubilation among
The fiends to see the people leaderless;
While Satan, with a farther-seeing eye,
Essayed to have the body spirited
Away to those whose wont had been to deem
The living voice Jehovah's oracle;
For here was that whose sanctity in their
Esteem would blur the eye of Faith, and turn
At length their reverence to idolatry.

But Michael, who had oft withstood the fiend,
Disclosed his presence in a flash of light,
And stood in silent majesty before
Him with a sword upraised, whose glitter seemed
To be aquiver with almightiness.
Nor for a season spake the fiend, but met
The other's gaze with flaming eye, in which
Was anger and a simulation of
Contempt. At length his thoughts took form,
When thus he spake :

‘Presumptuous one ! why in
Servility dost thou persist in this
Thy interference, in thy coward dread
Of One whose only attribute thine own
Or mine exceeding is the power to sway
His scepter o’er insensate things—a power
Whose keenest edge the might of mind can make
Retund, and leave the smitted unimpaired
In all his attributes ? ’Tis true I wear
The scars of His displeasure. Noble scars !
Mute witnesses that I am free, while thou
Art in a splendid vassalage, adorned
With glittering chains that hold thy nature down
Like some poor craven at His feet. Now I
Adjure thee, if one trace remains of the
Irradiant dignity belonging to
Thy rank, that thou withdraw and find employ
More worthy of thyself.’

“There, silent still,
Unmoved as Patience in her calmest hour,
Stood the opposing one, when thus the fiend :
‘Hast thou no will to act save to bow down

Before another's will and tremble at
His word? Or hast thou served so long that thou
Art too obtuse to see and know that thou
Hast rights? Or dost thou, in presumption, set
Thyself to this implied dictation to
Thy peer? I reckon not which, but bid thee now
Desist from this thy attitude, and leave
To me the custody of these remains,
That I may have them worthily perserved
In monumental sanctity.'

"Then spake

His peer, but not in sameness of retort,
Having respect for dignity though wrecked,
Nor venturing to assume the Infinite's
Prerogative, but said, 'Jehovah give
Thee His rebuke!' That, thought the fiend, implied
Appeal to greater than himself, and the
Invoked rebuke the ultimate of might—
Omnipotence belike; hence he recoiled
As from a red volcano's breath, when there,
In silence, hid from human eye, the earth
Enbosomed the remains, and heaven received
Its own."

Why stand not Michael and his peers,
I asked, between the living and the fiend
As then the dead?

"The loyal powers," said he,
"Have ever been resistant to the foe,
Employing force or moral means. The dead
Are inert dust, with the Omnipotent
To yea or nay. Hence there the fiend opposed
Omnipotence. Not so with living man,

Who has the yea and nay that destinate:
Choosing the better prompt, omnipotent—
Since he is in his Keeper's hand—or that
Of Satan, weak as bending reed. Of this
The fiend by long experience knew, which made
Him flee in haste before the potent name.
And yet he thought the blossom of his hope
About to burst, hence called his leaders, who,
Responding, met among the mists that lay
On Hermon's head, where he addressed them thus:

‘It gladdens me to meet you dignities,
Amid conditions whose benignant smile
Gives promise of continued benison.
Continued, for the past has favored us.
How we have ruffled His complacency
To see that we, the objects of His hate,
Have forced His choice twixt two alternatives:
His favorites to destroy or own them ours!
In either choice we swayed Omnipotence,
Hence, practically, are omnipotent.
His very efforts at defense against
Us whisper an acknowledgment of our
Success and His extremity; since the
Spectacular devices for the eye,
And wierdish nothings for the brain that breed
Hallucination's glaring terrors for
The soul, have been as rain on desert sands.
Their leader's presence gave the multitude
A show of fealty. Yet even he
Could hold them not in swerveless constancy;
But adverse winds of Fortune made them change,
With murmurs of distrust, and so provoke

The lightning of a wrath whose ruthless bolts
Devastated till but a drupe of the
Original remains upon the tree
Of time. And now their leader, too, is gone,
Nor leaves a gossamer of influence to
Restrain their waywardness; while but a whiff
From o'er the border of the land they seek
Allays their weariness. Then what, when they
Discover that Obstruction's watery arms
Are spread, forbidding their advance? What, when
They find that every rood of land will cost
A life? And what when, later, comes the shock,
On every side, of armies drunk with blood?
Memory will be a necromancer then,
Bringing the gone to mock their helplessness,
And nought of them remain, or but remain
To curse who led them there. That is the goal
To which conditions lead, and ours it is
To help them speed. Then go ye to the task
As gleaners of the earth's last field. Thwack whips
Of terror o'er the minds of kings until
You frenzy them to bring their armies with
The whelming force of torrents from the hills.
Then will be seen who wields omnipotence.'

"So made he boast to find a mockery in
Results; for soon the Infinite, upon
Whose finger swings the pendulum of earth,
And at whose fiat all its forces move,
Drew curb upon the stream that threatened, till
It reared upon its haunches, waiting for
The last to reach the farther shore. Forthwith
They rid the land of impious tenants and

Rolled back the billows of assault, when lo!
They were a nation. In the childhood of
Experience they had childhood's fickleness;
And as the acquisitions of their might,
So was their lust for pompous vanities,
In emulation of the cursed of God.
Soon, with importunate persistency,
They clamored for a king; and kings they got
Till gratified to surfeiting. Then came
Revulsion and a cleavage of the realm,
When Dan and Bethel climaxed Israel's
Apostacy; and soon Assyria's broom
Swept them as dust. Judah in turn became
Infatuated and forsook her Help,
When Babylonia stamp'd a ruthless foot
And made Jerusalem a waste, her sons
Compelled to drink the wine of wrath for which
They grew the grapes. Time's wheels rolled heavily
Along. A generation groaned and longed
For what was lost upon the road behind,
Without a guideboard pointing them that way,
Or morning star above the orient rim.
Then Satan and his leaders met midair,
In an exultant mood, when thus he charmed
Their ears:

 'Great potentates! It cheers to have
This access unto your collective ear,
Though volumes of superlatives I need
To voice the satisfaction that events
Afford. Erstwhile we saw these Flexibles
Where physical omnipotence alone
Could clear their path. When cleared, and they

Transferred to other ground, the changed location
Changed not them. They forced their way and seized
A fair domain, incited by necessity
That lashed enthusiasm to a foam.
But zeal that blazes most is soonest dead.
Omnipotence had done its utmost for
The flesh. Then ours it was to exercise
Omnipotence of mind on mind, and we
Prevailed within as had the Foe without.
Their lap became o'erheaped with golden store.
We gave that heap corrosion such as ate
Into their very soul. They shone with a
Magnificence that drew the stare of half
The world. We gave them dizziness until
Topheaviness upon the throne reversed
The order of prospective destiny.
Their hopes reached out to grasp a hand that was
To make their power the axis of the world.
We filled their hand with ashes, and entombed
Their fair domain in desolation's dust.
What sleepers were the sentinels of the
Omnipotent, to let us seize, within
A moiety, the treasure it was theirs
To guard! nor yet awake, to let us make
The final fraction of the race our own.
Ah! how shall they retake who could not keep?
But we had power to get, and now to keep.
We move the hand whose fingers—Babylon
And Egypt—move the world the way we will.
Methinks that Fortune waits in breathlessness
To see the outline of our time-long—ay,
Of our eternal plans, to furnish us

All needed means. With such a record, such
A prospect—having brought the last of earth
To a renunciation of allegiance—we
Have given quietus to His bruising thoughts
Who, thinking wishes are realities,
Deemed all the future His. Then let us keep,
Develop and employ what we have gained,
That it may serve us as a rung in the
Far-reaching ladder of ascent. Of the
Atomic incidents that make the sum
Of these results I speak not, nor attempt
To shadow forth a plan to fit unformed
Events, which may be better fitted when
We have the form. Still I and you have thoughts,
And thoughts breed thoughts—a fruitful progeny
That keep no genealogy; and now,
In this triumphant hour, they all must smile
So cheerily that I should like to have
You introduce them, each to all.'

“Belial

Was first to introduce his thoughts.

‘Great Chief,’

He said, ‘I see the ladder of ascent,
Whose rungs to mount were as to step from star
To star in skirting the circumference
Of space. You set the ladder in the soil
Of Eden, and we climbed a rung to look
Upon a dead world’s watery grave. The next
Rung where a world’s dead soul was wrapt in an
Egyptian shroud. The next when empires, like
Volcanic islands in the sea, arose
And had sterility of character.

And now this stimulated residue
Of mankind, meant to be the vital germ,
Assimilating all the elements
Of earth, becomes the prey of parasites;
In all of which developments we were
The impetus. Then we who thus have climbed
Can still ascend from known realities
To regions of the inconceivable.'

"Said Mammon, 'We must keep in mind the means
Of past success. Egyptian bondage was
A cordon of the soul that kept it in
Restraint. Freedom and plenty brought rebound
That rioted in wantonness of will.
Bondage again is theirs; yet not with
Dull stolidity to grind away the years,
But with their every thought of other days
A sting whose poison brings a festering sore
To every sensibility. This we
Must aggravate, by tantalizing them
With hopes that breed revolt, and so provoke
Repressive vengeance, when, resentful in
Distrust, their hearts will turn against the One
Unseen as causing what ourselves have done.'

"Then Bacchus thus: 'The past is in the grave,
Where standing, I pronounce its elegy:
Thou silent one, so boisterous in thy day!
We have a memory of thy fickle moods;
Thy brimful promises and empty deeds;
Thy smiles and tears that shuttlecocked our hearts;
Thy silences when we had ears to hear,
And thunders when we craved nepenthic sleep;
Thy winter pelting us with icy fears;

Thy summer mellowing into hopefulness.
The last drop from thy cup is best remembered;
For which we pardon and absolve thy soul.
Sleep thou while, jocund in the present, we
Pursue the whirl atrip with virgin Hope.
Sleep well. We would not wake thee from a sleep
So sound. Ay, sleep. We have no grudge against
Thee. Death has settled our accounts. I scan
Thy pedigree. Child of Eternity,
Sire of the *Is*, grandsire of *Is-to-be*.
O Chief! the *Is* exhilarates me to
The point of ecstasy, and I would thus
Invoke the favor of the *Is-to-be*:

Wake up infant *Is-to-be*!
Wake up with a smile for me;
Or if thou wilt wake to weep,
I would have thee stay asleep.

Wake thou up with joyous crow.
Stretch thy little limbs and grow;
For my faith already can
See in thee the coming man.

Wake and prattle now to me
Of the better things to be;
Of the worlds that we shall win
In the years that now begin.

Wake, for here thy father stands
With a guerdon in his hands,
And a promise that his son
More shall do than he has done.

Wake, nor let thy father's word
Which my inner ear has heard,
By thy life in mute reply,
Be pronounced a father's lie.

Wake, and when a man thou art,
Tell the secret to my heart,
What our worlds of power will be
In thy years, O, Is-to-be.

O Chief! I look upon the earth as ours
By right of might. I hear the hiccough of
Her madness, and confess myself the cause.
I see her stagger to descent into
A state where I have kindled hell. I feel
The shudder of her agony as thrills of bliss,
And think of all as at a banquet of
Our hope, whose viands are despairing groans,
Seasoned with curses on our appetite.
These are our trophies in the Is-to-be.
And may the Foe be there to see!

‘My thoughts,
Are with the *was*,’ said Moloch. ‘I recall
When by the mount there were but neophytes,
Held by the Foe in tutelage. I gave
Their hearts a blinding touch and led them to
The ditch, then kept them mired for twoscore years.
Next, in their heyday of autonomy,
I cushioned them in soul-security,
Allayed the rancor of the conflict days,
And had them hob-nob with our devotées
Until their hearts became susceptible

To the zymotic influence circling them;
And now our gloating minions have them
In duress, where they will blend their characters
To one dull neutral hue. Already they
Are neutral to the sight of the Unseen.
But they shall yet become personified
As black damnation to His eye. Then shall
We be prepared to form our plans for new
Emprise upon a vaster scale.'

"He ceased.

Then Satan added thus:

'Your thoughts are all
Most worthy of yourselves. Nor need I more
Than echo Moloch's final word. We must
Mature a general plan for earth; a plan
From which we may project into the vast
Domain beyond; for which prepare yourselves.'

"That said, they vanished, full of bubble thoughts
That could but float in emptiness and burst,
Displaying animus and ignorance."

How iterant, said I, was their boasting pride.
Said he:

"It was the only theme where thought
Could find a clime congenial to their nature.
And having nothing good to contemplate,
They made a pseudo goodness of their deeds,
And kept it ever in their eye, that self
Might be on easy terms with self, and find
An inspiration to persistent hope.
But during all, the Infinite gave truth
An impact on the thought of master powers,
That they might take the light from Mercy's hand.

Some took the lantern but refused the light,
And kept its form in silhouette upon
Their palace walls. So there it was, lightless
As mummy sepulchered in desert sand,
Till time should bring it forth to certify
The cardinals of fact and truth received,
Which now is done. And though but dimly seen,
It is deciphered by the ready eye,
And therein recognized its origin.
Upon the obverse of these great events
Was that of discipline, to press the cup
Of Babylon to Judah's lip, and make
Her drink the gall of its idolatry,
To have her keep a lingering taste of its
Nauseating bitterness—nor did it fail.
At length the night of discipline was past,
And laid aside her penitential robes,
When from their closeted seclusion came
Her laws and history, graved on more than stone,
And cleared away the gathered dust of years.
Then had her dumb harps loosened tongues of joy.
Dumb? Ah! when on the willows hung, those harps
Were still eolian to her secret ear;
Nor Babylonia's breezes changed their tone
Of individuality from its divine
Identity. At length they had a new
Twang to the olden songs, and Zion waved
The banners of her ecstasy. Though to
Her tongue had come a lisp—a sibboleth
Acquired in contact with the foreign tongue—
Her words were true in import as the mind
Of God; for not her spirit bent beneath

Its yoke to kiss the chains that galled, but past
And future there were hyphened, eternized,
And Freedom blew the trump of jubilee.
When came the dayspring of autonomy,
She thought the future had a smiling face.
That dayspring soon displayed the morning bow
That omens a tempestuous day. She had
The scaffolding; but never was it hers
To raise a topstone of autonomy.
And duplicate the prowess of the past;
For by distractions of intrigue and strife,
She tore the ancient laurels from her brow,
Brake, one by one, the columns of her strength,
When nations trampled on her weakness with
Impunity; yet whom she trusted for
Deliverance, this from that and that from this,
With vacillation pitiful, till Rome
Stept forth and bound her with a friendly chain,
Whose links were galling to the very bone,
And kept her groaning in her helplessness.
Still the attritions of an age when minds
Were stepping in the star-paved paths of thought,
Produced a glow of intellectual fire,
Which glowed to scorch instead of cheer; to shew
The dark instead of light their way. While thus,
Her leaders held the torch of truth as in
A mummied hand, whose light shone out
In contrast with the darkness circling them,
And sanguine ones were looking for the dawn—
The Sun of righteousness—the promised Seed."

CANTO XV



CANTO XV

While he unfolded thus the story of
The world's development, I was upon
A mental promontory, whence I looked
Across the sea of time and saw the great
Upheavals of mankind, and heard the roar
Of its tempestuous elements, which rolled
The billows on the shuddering shore, strewing
It with the wrecks of empires. Then the scene,
As in a panorama, passed, and I
Beheld an empire that embraced the power
And glory of the world ; in having which
The demons had the world, with Satan's eye
And hand upon the whole, involving me
In deep perplexity, since it implied
The fiend's ubiquity, and that again
The attribute of omnipresence in
A finite, else the finite acting with
A simultaneous power on every mind
Without the attribute, either of which
Involved a paradox, when thus he spake :

“An omnipresence has relation to
A sphere. That of the Infinite extends
From every movement of the inmost orb
To those that fringe the outer belt in space,
And all are subject to the action of
His will, which is their law ; while Satan acts
As mind on mind upon the earth alone,
And is an infinite as man is to

A ball of mites—not in his personal
Dimensions, but capacity to see
And act with mental power, affecting so
The senses and the will. The insect with
Its compound eye, the beast its keener scent,
And bird that soars above the mountain peaks,
Leave man still regally above them all,
With quasi omnipresence. Though but on
The threshold of his possibilities,
The lightning is the lackey of his thought,
Bearing his messages from zone to zone,
And with a flash he moves a world of mind.
But Satan, who retains archangelhood,
Has power transcending man's as his the fly,
The hound, the eagle—fetterless as thought,
And mundane distance little but a name.
Then deem it not incredible that while with
Supersensuous eye he looks upon
Man's thoughts as he upon material things,
He should, with super-telepathic power,
Be acting on the minds of all, as on
The keys of some great instrument, and by
His touch producing discord on the earth.
He prompts withal his underleaders, who
In turn their followers, as executors,
To operate through sense upon the soul.
So through the ages he has done, at once
Developed in his nature as a fiend,
And waxed in skill as widened out the field."

His power, I said, and past achievements seemed
To make him destinator of the race.

"So thought the fiend, not knowing that he was

Rough-hewing what should be foundation stones,
On which the Infinite would build up, age
By age, the temple of humanity.
But while in his exulting ignorance
He looked for triumph's consummating hour,
Earth's eye of faith was poring o'er the page
Whose prophecies became illuminant,
Flooding men with the splendor of a hope;
And Expectation listened at the door
To hear the footsteps of the coming Seed.
Although the hope was not the Seed, to him
It seemed a resurrection from the dead,
The vitalizing of forgotten dust.
Thus then he reasoned with himself:

‘What next,

When four milleniums that have fattened on
The glories of my power are billous with
A hope of the impossible? Ay, the
Impossible. But soon a dose of fact
Will bring relief, and appetize the age
For my purveyance. Let the hoppers, then,
Be gorged. Revulsion will be greater at
The end. But no! They have no hope, for hope
Has something under it. They only wish,
And wishes are but Fancy gasping for
Fresh air. They in imagination see
A something robed in cast-off clothes.
And age by age has had who gave to it
A voice. Then Silence breathed its epitaph.
But lo! its ghost appears above its grave,
And at the sight this visionary cult
Imagines it can hear a unison

Of voices coming from the caverns of
Past years, of which it is interpreter.
Hence with dogmatic confidence it prates,
As though some overwhelming power were nigh,
Prepared to seize the earth and swerve it from
The orbit of my plans. 'Tis but a wish,
I say—a shadow; still, sufficient to
Divert attention that way when I will
It this; and so 'tis an impediment.
Well, while their wish is striding west the earth
Is turning east, and they with it; and I
Am gravitation to the earth. But the
Vitality of a delusion! How
It clings unto the skirts of Time until
Its hand is numb! and then 'tis shaken loose.
But call the wish a hope, and say it has
A basis of reality. What then? The Seed,
Of woman born, would be like woman—weak.
Enough. Let the fond dreamers have their dream.'
“While thus affecting unconcerned contempt,
His thoughts were burdened with the Eden curse.
And though the hoping could not bring the Seed,
And they who hoped were insignificant
In power, the hope had a significance
That could not be ignored. Therefore,
The more he thought of it the more disturbed
Became his mind, and with profounder thought,
More dark the cloud of his perplexity,
Intensifying his uneasiness.
Awhile irresolute, at length he called
The leaders to a midair council twixt
Jehovah's temple and the stars, where he

Addressed them thus :

‘Ye great victorious ones!
Victorious? Ay. We have the harvest and
The Foe the gleaning, which shall yet be ours,
Though it involves a small emergency.
But our emergencies expand the mind,
And we become a greater self; and as
The self is greatened so is the ground for hope.
Since last we met the Foe has exercised
Increased activity. His trusted ones
We left beneath the Babylonion heel,
Groaning in abject helplessness. The heel
Was raised by rival leverage, and they
Regained the old domain. And though we scourged
Them with a thousand difficulties, they
Attained a splendor having semblance of
The old autonomy, in which was more
Of glitter than the gold of fealty;
The glitter of our burnishing, which might
Today deceive a thousand gods. Thus much
Conceded—there a loss and here a gain—
We feel at once a spur of stimulus
And pat of kind encouragement, when lo!
We stumble o’er the new emergency.
A something that is nothing in itself,
Save as a symptom of unrest, is what
Suggested that we meet in council thus.
You may recall that in my first report
Was mention of an incidental of
The curse pronounced: the promise of a Seed
With bruising power, and I the object to
Be bruised. That promise-threat I treated with

Contempt, and now would leave asleep among
The things that were. But those there are who will
Not let it lie there undisturbed. We have
Beheld world-wanderers rush through space,
Having portentious terrors for mankind.
So, but with opposite effects, have come
And gone great dreams of that portentous threat.
And now the dreaming cult proclaims the time
Of its fulfillment at the door; by which
They stimulate a common hope, and make
Themselves impregnable to our assault,
While causing turmoil in the common mind,
With expectations that infatuate.
To set ourselves against their hope would be
To raise a hand to stop a hurricane.
For this their hope is but an eager wish:
And eager wishes have a second-sight
That sees realities in nothingness.
Hence, to attack their hopes is to attack
A nought, with nought as our reward.
But we may make their hope a base for ours,
By urging it to ruinous excess.
First, we must chafe the spots where galls the yoke
Of Rome, until the smart infuriates
Their zealotry, and so deflects their view
That they will see Deliverance holding out
Her hand, while Fortune winks and lures them on.
Next, goad the jealousy of Rome to tread
Them into dust with her relentless foot,
Giving their dreams fulfillment in a dread
Reality that leaves them in despair.
To *do* this is our task, the *how* our problem.

To its solution I invite your thought.' -

"Belial responded thus:

'Most worthy Chief

And peers! The key of skill that has unlocked

The problems of the past will serve us here.

The length of arm that reaches o'er the seas;

The strength that tore the crown from Carthage and

That asks no odds of earth or heaven when thus

And so it wills;—that arm, that strength is ours.

Ay, Rome is ours, and having Rome, we have

A mightiness to wrench the orbs of power

From out their spheres and grind them into dust.

What, then, is this poor fatuous weakling with

Its head upon her lap? Belike she boxed

Its ears until the sparks flew and it thought

Them stars that omened luck; and so it hopes!

But I have thoughts that look to ultimates;

Thoughts that, enforced, would exeunt Rome and all

The paraphernalia of earthly power.

Deaden the tree, its every branch will die.

Rome is the tree and they a graft in it.

Then deaden Rome and they perforce will die,

And this magnificence of sanctity

Beneath us, with its ceremonial pomps,

And every vestige of the past, be as

The dust of Babylon. These hopers, had

They once been grafts in Babylon, as now

In Rome, had shared the doom of Babylon.

Our efforts, then, must be to worm our way

Into the roots of Rome until her bulk

Above becomes too heavy for the state

Of rottenness below; then farewell to

The hope of these resistants, whom to save
The efforts of a thousand Seeds would be
In vain. How then could come the bruise? Now seen
The task, the how of its performance is
A challenge to our skill, accepting which
My thoughts are piercing to the deepest roots;
And there I find unwilling servitude
That fain would have the empire topper o'er,
In hope of better where could not be worse.
I rise, and at the surface find a girth
That is but massive fickleness, prepared
To yield the way that Fortune's tempest blows.
I need but give a zest to appetite
To have them gnaw till comes the topple and
The thundrous crash.'

“He ceased, when Mammon spake
With eager fluency:

‘Great Chief, and ye
Illustrious ones! To me this hope smacks more
Of prophecy than threat, in that it shows
Relax of hold on that which is and grope
For what is not. As they relax we have
Encouragement to seize, and as they grope
A chance to take their hand and lead our way.
While Belial gives attention to the roots.
And waits the crash of the tremendous fall,
Be mine to blight the leaves, the branches and
The bole, the hoppers with the rest, and leave
No trace of its vitality to make
A future sprouting possible. I dream . . .
Not here in this; tinkle no empty boast;
Pursue no phantom hope, but with an eye

Wide open see the end of what is well
Begun. The farthest provinces I keep
A-flutter for revolt, the nearer sway
With rivalries for pomp and riotous
Indulgence, while the central power is kept
Aquiver with insatiate desires.
With such efficiency I operate
That few are rich whose dainties savor not
Of blood; few who have intellectual wealth
But have a miser heart; few in the seats
Of justice but would drain the public veins,
And few who formulate the laws but put
In them a sordid element of self.
Thus from the roots and bole to farthest tip,
The tree is deadening; and when comes the fall,
The thews of Havoc shall expend their strength
In hewing it to burn, and after that
Our feet walk o'er the ashes of its doom.'

"Next Bacchus, with a lightsome gleam upon
His countenance spake thus:

'Great Chief and peers!

When last we met for interchange of thought,
In fitting words I elegized the *was*,
And lyricized in hope the *Is-to-be*.
But every hope has withered in the scorch
Of years, of which I gather up the leaves
That lie about the feet of *Is*, and lay
Them with new hopes upon the bier of *Was*.

Is-to-be has changed his name,
Nor in nature is the same;

Hence we look on him no more
As we looked on him before.

He awoke to work us ill,
With his ways our pleasure kill;
Struck us with his little hands,
In contempt of our commands.

As he grew in strength and years,
He provoked us into fears;
For our fairest hopes he fought,
Caring not to please in aught.

Better he had never been
Than to fill his life with sin;
Sin of which we pay the cost
In the hopes that we have lost.

Knowing that his days are spent,
We would not his end lament,
Hoping better things to see
In another Is-to-be.

There! that is a biography of Hope
That laughed and danced its day, then died. Time is
A graveyard crammed with buried hopes; buried
So deep that there is room for more above,
Tier upon tier. And we have many dear
Ones buried there; to think of which might make
A statue weep. But, side by side with ours,
The Foe has many in eternal sleep.
My memory treads again the beaten road,
Made dusty by the feet of yesterdays,
And looks adown the vista of the years

To where the fathers of these devotees
Hobbled on crutchy promises that failed
Them as we made the nations give the trip.
And now I see the children taking up
The crutches of the sires, to hobble as
Of old. The mitred ones have fallen at
My touch, and they who were the oracles
Of the Unseen succumbed before my power,
And with them fell embattled hosts of hope.
Then ask, Are their successors more than they?
Or have my shafts been blunted at the point?
What help have these to stand where others fell?
Or what can they in gyves who fell when free?
Nay, but their present hope is born of their
Despair. But what if came the wondrous Seed?
They are themselves and as themselves will do;
As part of Rome, their lot be that of Rome.
But I control the appetite of Rome;
And appetite is the imperial Power;
The Power to give their sentence in the court
Of destiny.'

“Then Moloch, looking grave
As some moss-covered monument, spake thus:

‘Illustrious Chief and partners in the strife!
What, were these hopers grafted into Rome?
They still would bear their native kind of fruit.
But no. Though *in* they are no part of Rome.
In Egypt they were magnetized so that
They have attractive sympathies; nor the
Vicissitudes of time have lessened their
Magnetic power, which isolates them from
The non-affinities. And should Rome sink

Into a sea of dark forgetfulness,
They still would rise above the gulping of
The waves. Ay, let Rome perish, ground to dust,
And they with Rome, between the millstones of
Almighty power, their very dust would come
Together with an impulse to cohere.
Hence I with you, O Chief! would magnify
The mirage of their hope and urge pursuit.
When they shall realize that every age,
And all their trusted oracles have mocked
Them, will be Fortune's hour for our designs.
Then not to autonomic anarchy
I look for their discomfiture, but to
A change of character, of thought and trust,
Which may develop as we supervise.
In mental, moral and the physical
There are carnivora and ruminantia,
Each with its own specific appetite.
These, then, must be fed on what will please.
Give them their pomps, their quillets and conceits,
All liveried in the robes of sanctity,
And keep their thoughts turned inward on themselves
Until the ego deifies itself,
They will be our obsequious servitors,
Yet think, mayhap, that they are bruising us.'
"Then Satan thus, as in complacent mood:
'In what you say I see so many beams
Of fact from one great sun of thought. I view
The past with all its glory of achievement.
I see the mouth of Fury open, and
I hear the smack of watery lips that gulp
A world. I look and see the cleaving of

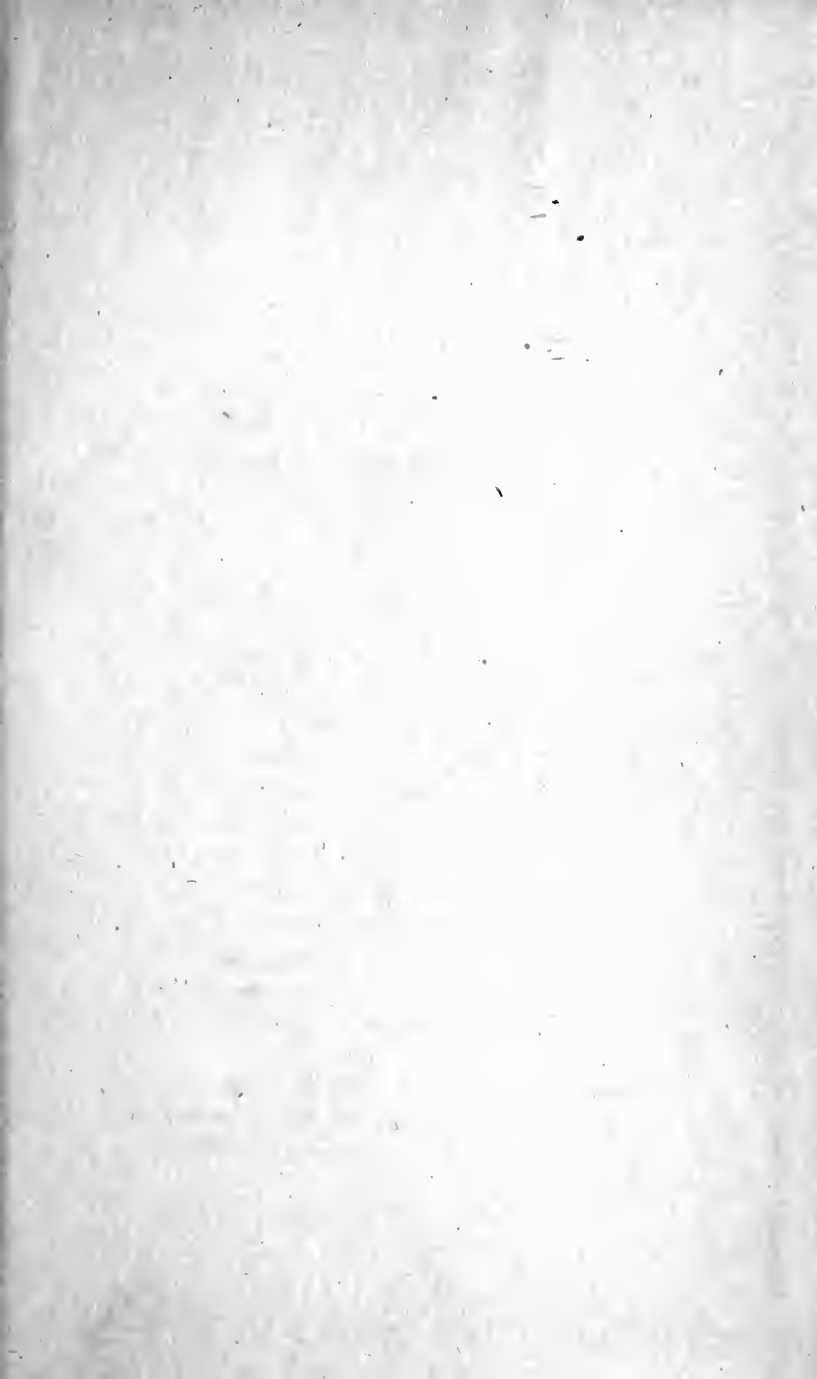
A racial cornerstone, whose splinter's I
Appropriated to display our power.
The centuries rolled upon their groaning wheels,
Yet nothing inkled of the promised Seed.
I see the partiality that nursed
And brought a race to a conspicuous height,
Then fixed its gaze upon a golden world
Of promises, when we stept in between
It and that world, and midnight settled down
Upon its hopes; and still, when needed most,
No promised Seed appears. I look again
And see the weakling raise its feeble head,
And soon 'tis cooing in the lap of Rome,
Cheered by the glitter of a tinsel hope
That seems a foregleam from the golden world.
And so the Seed is only yet a hope.
With such a record it is ours to hope.
Albeit they are hoping with a new
Tenacity that sees the nothing at
Their door. And so the hope flows on into
A dead sea ever filling, never full.
Belial and Mammon see the fall of Rome,
And these fond dreamers crushed beneath the wreck.
But they who outlived Babylon and her
Transcendent glory may rejuvenate.
But Moloch shows preliminary means,
Suggesting that we draw these nurslings from
The bosom of the trusted One whom they
Have served, and wean them from the memory of
His name, that when they lie beneath the wreck
Of Rome, that wreck may prove their grave, since
Cursed by Him whose bosom they had left. Here, then,

Our problem is, to cure them of their hope.
To romanize them is the remedy—
Not as to form, to eye, to consciousness;
But romanize their heart. Transfigure their
Conception of the object of the hope,
That it may be no more a person but
An ideal born of the collective mind—
Which is the Woman amplified by long
Descent—and that, personified, will be
The promised Seed. Then open to the mind
A vision of such possibilities
Of power, aggrandizement and glory as
Will dazzle the imagination of
Some fiery zealot, moving him to fire
The wrath of Rome. Then let the flames of her
Consuming fury burn. That done, the earth
Is ours, and not an evening zephyr will
Be laden with a whisper of the Seed.'

"Ere fell the last word from his lips, a sheen
Of overpowering splendor burst above
The slumbering hills of Bethlehem, and an
Innumerable throng of shining ones
Was visible, and gave a glory-shout
Of, 'Peace on earth, good will to men!' and in
The glad refrain announced—the Seed had come!"

That said, I was enveloped by a mist,
Which thickened into darkness, followed by
A sense of earthening, and behold! the end.

FINIS.



OCT 30 1912



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 015 762 836 7